



Rochester

Parks and Recreation System Plan

JULY DRAFT



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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Parks and recreation are vital and integral parts of the City of Rochester. For close to 150 years, parks have played an important part of the quality of life that residents and visitors enjoy. They contribute to neighborhood identity, environmental sustainability, resident health and well-being, and economic development. With more than 4,200 acres, 120 parks, and 85-miles of trail, Rochester's Park and Recreation System is accessible, highly-utilized, and an essential part of the City.

Community input gathered in the planning process indicated that residents are generally satisfied with the parks and recreation system, but that there are improvements that could be made to make it great. Participants in the fall 2015 questionnaire gave the system a 72% satisfaction rating. A majority of participants expressed satisfaction with the quality of parks, location of parks, and trail and sidewalk connections. Areas where the system fell short were in the condition of the some trails and cleanliness, which is likely a reflection of the aging system.

Moving from good to great will not be easy. It will take continued, big-picture visioning, change, creativity, commitment, and additional resources. The system planning process demonstrated that the park and recreation system has a wide, diverse base of partners and supporters.

This System Plan, shaped by Rochester residents, sets the stage for future investment, and is a long-term guide for Park Board, City Council and City Staff in decision-making for the next 20 years. It offers guiding principles, recommendations, priorities, and tools to help the City, its citizens, and partner organizations keep Rochester's park and recreation system healthy and relevant well into the future.

The Park and Recreation System Plan complements the directions established in the Comprehensive Plan, and provides detailed guidance in the development, management, and operations of the system. This direction is based on the community's expressed needs and desires as well as analyses of demographic changes, future trends, and Rochester's current system. It is important to recognize that the plan addresses park needs at a system-wide level. Specific initiatives, like the development of an individual park, will still require additional, detailed master planning. In addition, the recommendations in the System Plan to not constitute all possible Parks and Recreation actions. Instead, the Plan provides a framework to guide long and short term decision-making and investments in the system.

Top 7 Important Factors in Deciding Where to Live

1. *89% Sidewalks and Places to Take Walks*
2. *83% Easy Access to Entertainment Options (Shopping, Restaurants, and Theater)*
3. *78% High Quality Public Schools*
4. *72% Being Within a Short Commute to Work*
5. *69% Being With an Easy Walk of Places I want to Go in the Community*
6. *69% Being Close to Parks and Playgrounds*
7. *68% Easy Access to the Highway*

2015 Southeast Minnesota Association of Realtors

Importance of Parks + Recreation

Parks are one of the most important and highly prized components of any community. They are sources of civic identity and pride and are essential to the physical, economic, environmental, and social health of cities and their residents. As in many communities, the 2015 Southeast Minnesota Association of Realtors (SEMAR) survey found that sidewalks and places to take walks was one of the top three factors in deciding where to live.

Health

Parks and trails encourage healthy, happy, active lifestyles by providing a venue for physical activity. Whether walking or biking on the city's trails, playing a pickup baseball or softball game, participating in an organized soccer league, or snowshoeing through the woods, parks provide essential places for people to exercise.

When people have access to park facilities and programming, they are more likely to be active, therefore improving their physical health. Additionally, exposure to the natural areas that parks and open space provide is a proven link to improved psychological health.

Property Values

Numerous studies have shown that proximity to parks, trails, and open space has a positive impact on property values. Commercial property values can also be increased with proximity to these amenities, creating potential for these sites to act as catalysts for redevelopment.

Beauty

Parkways, tree-lined streets, gardens, lush landscaped areas, views of rivers and lakes, stately woods, and public art are all attributes of cities that are beautiful places to live, work, play, and shop. Visitors often remember a place by its access to beautiful natural areas, contributing to a positive community image. All of these attributes contribute to the livability and vitality of a city.

Cultural + Social Amenity

In a time when social media defines the interactions of many people, parks and recreational centers are places to meet face-to-face, catch up with family members and friends, and feel like part of the larger community. As a focal point of neighborhoods, parks help develop connections between residents by providing a venue for community-building gatherings, like farmers markets, school trips, festivals, and celebrations.

Significant natural features, like Quarry Hill Nature Center, and historical and cultural sites, like Plummer House, are preserved for the enjoyment of both present and future community members.

Nature Value + Environmental Benefits

Savannas, prairies, forests, and wetlands all inherently improve air and water quality while providing habitat for diverse species of plants and animals. These areas also play a role in stormwater management and protecting the quality and vitality of natural areas. Sound management of natural areas can reduce the prevalence of invasive species and improve environmental outcomes for neighboring properties.

Community Health

Recreation programs that are offered for all ages and income levels promote lifelong learning opportunities and a supportive community atmosphere. Specific programs can provide enjoyable learning activities for youth, keep seniors active and connected, or educate all community members about the importance of active living and sustainability.



Health: Soldier's Field Track



Beauty: Silver Lake

Planning Process



This planning effort was kicked off in August of 2015, and represents input gathered from the community, stakeholders, city staff, and city officials over the following year. Online questionnaires, meetings, focus groups, park and community tours, and group brainstorming efforts guided the development of this system plan by providing valuable input and collective wisdom. The plan also incorporates the expertise of the consultant team, an analysis of benchmarking data, a system-wide evaluation by city staff and the consultants, and best practices collected from other peer communities.

The Rochester City Council and Park Board provided guidance and input for the plan's content throughout every phase of the project. Meetings between the City Council and the consultants were held January 25, 2016 and July 18, 2016. The Park Board collaborated with the consultants on December 17, 2015, January 5, 2016, April 5, 2016, and July 5, 2016.

The goal of the planning process was to educate and raise awareness about the importance of parks and recreation while ensuring that future investment in Rochester's system meets the needs of the community. Throughout this planning process, over 2,500 residents and stakeholders were engaged to ensure the final plan was reflective of community desires. Public outreach efforts included:

- » Eight Advisory Committee meetings spread throughout the year-long planning process.
- » Seven listening sessions on October 22, 2016 attended by representatives of over 25 local organizations. These listening sessions covered the areas of arts, nature/environment, indoor sports, outdoor field/court sports, outdoor adventure sports, and diversity.
- » Two online questionnaires, one in the Fall of 2015 to solicit input on needs and opportunities, and one in Spring of 2016 to review draft recommendations. The two questionnaires generated over 3,200 individual comments.
- » Community Open Houses held on October 15, 2015 and April 28, 2016. April Open House included break-out sessions on public art, natural areas/sustainability, trails, and facilities.
- » Targeted outreach at Hawthorne Education Center and through the Diversity Council.



The public reviewed the plan's recommendations and provided input at the April Open House

Parks Administration

The City of Rochester Park Board provides oversight of the park and recreation system. While the City Council of Rochester allocates funding, it is the seven-member Park Board that provides policy direction to the Park and Recreation Department. This direction includes reviewing and approving the department annual budget and direct expenditures for the maintenance and improvement of parks and parkways.

Existing Plans

The analysis of existing conditions included the review and synthesis of existing reports and findings from community engagement efforts. Of the more than 50 plans available, the list to the right identifies those most relevant to the park and recreation system planning effort. A review of these documents provided the following key lessons:

Community Strengths

- » Vibrant community
- » Overall small town feel
- » Availability of parks, green spaces, and trails
- » Reputation as a wellness city
- » Strong neighborhoods

Desires for the Future

- » More indoor recreation space
- » Environmental sustainability/protection of natural resources
- » Improved connectivity
- » Expanded winter recreational opportunities
- » Continued growth of local sports and recreation programs
- » Additional community events throughout the year
- » Investment in public art
- » More green space needed Downtown
- » Capitalization of river assets
- » Preservation of areas of unique natural or recreational value

Coordinated Planning Efforts

The following planning efforts were underway simultaneously with the development of the Park and Recreation System Plan.

Plans Referenced

- » *About YoU – Rochester Community Asset Inventory Report (2012)*
- » *DMC Community Conversations Report (July 2014)*
- » *Rochester Comprehensive Plan 2040*
- *Engagement Stages 1 and 2 (SWOT, Visions, Values) – January 2015*
- *Trends Workshop Summary – May 2015*
- *CrowdGauge Online Survey Results (January-March 2015)*
- *Land Use Plan for the Rochester Urban Service Area-Amended January 2013*
- » *Destination Medical Center Development Plan – 2015 DRAFT*
- » *Downtown Rochester – 2010 Master Plan*
- » *Envision UMR Master Plan – 2014*
- » *Mayo Clinic Five-Year Plan Update*
- » *Bicycle Master Plan - 2012*

Comprehensive Plan

The City of Rochester's 2040 Comprehensive Plan (Planning 2 Succeed) was in the process of being updated in correlation with the Parks and Recreation System Plan. The Comprehensive Plan combines land use, transportation, housing, environmental resources, parks, trails, open space, community facilities, community development, and community image into a long-range plan. Community input from the Comprehensive Planning process was valuable as a starting point for the park and recreation system planning. Collaboration between the two planning processes occurred at many points with strategic directions from the Park and Recreation System Plan incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

Public Art System Master Plan

The Greater Rochester Arts and Cultural Trust began the development of a Public Art System Master Plan in late 2015. A representative of the Greater Rochester Arts and Cultural Trust was a member of the Advisory Committee who helped shape the System Plan recommendations regarding public art.

How to Use the Plan

Rochester's Parks and Recreation System Plan is organized into **six** chapters. Chapter One introduces and provides context for the plan. Chapter Two outlines national and local trends that impact current and future development and use of park and recreation systems. Chapter Three provides an overview of Rochester's existing park system. Chapter Four contains the vision and guiding principles for the future of Rochester's parks and recreation system. Chapter Five identifies the goals, policies, and strategies recommended to achieve the guiding principles. The recommendations are organized into the categories of Parks, Facilities, Trails, Natural Areas, Programming, Sustainability, Public Health, Public Art, and Management and Operations. Chapter Six provides implementation tools, including priorities to assist with future decision-making, general cost estimates, potential funding sources, and a process to review proposed projects not contemplated in the system plan.

It is important to recognize that the recommendations contained within this plan do not constitute all possible future actions. Instead, the recommendations, along with the system plan as a whole, provide a framework to guide future decision-making. Given the 20-year timeframe, it is anticipated that the system plan may need to change as the community responds to trends, needs, and opportunities that arise.



Chapter 2:

Trends

In order to keep pace with the demands of a growing population, the City of Rochester needs to consider how the dynamic nature of technologies, trends, cultures, and activities will affect facility and programming needs. The following chapter explores key trends and their potential implications for the park and recreation system.

By building flexibility into the City's recreation and park facilities, Rochester will be able to adapt quickly and efficiently in order to meet these new demands.



Changing Social Trends

Increasing Demands on Time

- » The average American works 46.7 hours/week
- » The amount of unstructured play in a child's day is 4-7 minutes/day on average, while time spent in front of an electronic screen is more than 7 hours per day.

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Convenient, safe locations
- » Flexible hours
- » More hours
- » Individualized schedules
- » After school programs



Changing Social Trends

Increasingly Anxious About Safety

- » Perception of Safety and Income: 15% of adults with household income less than \$35,000 have been afraid to leave their homes, versus 1% of adults with household income greater than \$75,000
- » 5% of Olmsted County adults experienced a time in the last year in which they were afraid to leave home because of violence in the area.

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Better lighting
- » Safer trails and parks
- » Closer facilities



Changing Social Trends

Increasingly Disconnected From Nature

- » Children's play has changed from outdoors to indoors since the 1950s.
- » Greater understanding of developmental benefits of different types of play, including unstructured, exploratory, creative play
- » Desire to connect with the natural world and ecosystems

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » More natural areas
- » More educational/interpretive programs
- » Balance of environment & recreation
- » Desire for passive open space
- » Interest in aesthetics and gardens
- » Adventures/Nontraditional sports



Changing Social Trends

Increased Importance of Place + Experiences

- » The increased mobility of the creative class (telecommuting, freelance work) has resulted in individuals choosing where they live based on lifestyle and proximity to other creative people rather than employment opportunities.
- » 78% of millennials would choose to spend money on a desirable experience or event over buying something desirable.

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Placemaking in parks and other public places
- » Inclusion of public art
- » Programs and Events
- » Co-production of services and experiences
- » Parks as economic generators
- » Distinctive programming
- » Destination features



Changing Health Trends

Increasing Physical + Mental Health Problems

- » 64% of Olmsted County adults are overweight, with 28% being obese
- » 10% of Olmsted County youth feel sad all or most days

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Integration of body & mind
- » Active Living
- » Walking, running, and biking trails
- » New fitness opportunities
- » Fitness and weight lifting facilities



Changing Health Trends

Increased Interest in Aging Actively

- » 12.6% of Olmsted County residents were 65+ in 2010
- » According to a 2013 survey, issues related to aging (elderhealth) was cited as one of the most pressing community health issues in Olmsted county

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » More senior recreation
- » More mid-day recreation programs
- » Less active outdoor recreation- more walking, gardening, culture, etc.
- » Desire for volunteer opportunities



Changing Demographic Trends

Increasing Diversity

- » In Rochester, racial and ethnic minorities have grown from 14% of the population in 2000 to 18% in 2010
- » 12.4% of Olmsted County speak a language other than English at home

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Accommodate family gatherings
- » Clustering activities to support multi-generational events
- » Playgrounds / sport courts
- » Multi-purpose fields (Including soccer & cricket)
- » Need for culturally appropriate programs & spaces



Changing Demographic Trends

More Transient

- » 24% of U.S. adults reported moving to a different city within the United States in the past five years
- » The average American moves 11.7 times during the course of their lifetime

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Strong marketing & outreach needed
- » Adapt to changing residents
- » Flexible and multifaceted
- » Effective wayfinding



Changing Financial Trends

Pinched Household Budgets

- » 9% of Rochester residents live in poverty
- » 29% of Rochester household incomes are less than \$50k

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Access challenges
- » Affordability factor
- » Increased social service needs

Pinched Government Budgets

- » Many cities are apprehensive about spending
- » Many cities face a backlog of deferred maintenance and replacements from the past decade

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Need for partnerships & shared facilities
- » Focus on quality over quantity
- » Need for stable funding
- » Balance between new and existing
- » Life-cycle cost considerations
- » Use of volunteer labor for building and operations



Changing Environmental Trends

Demand for Green Alternatives

- » Transportation
- » Biking, Walking, Transit
- » Stormwater treatment
- » Maintenance practices
- » Native/Habitat restoration
- » Education
- » Local Food Systems

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Need for staff knowledgeable about sustainable practices
- » Increased interest in community gardens and edible plantings
- » Interest in year-round commuting routes and amenities (bike racks, lockers, showers) to support transportation alternatives



Changing Parks + Rec Trends

Rise in Informal Adult Recreation versus League Participation

- » In 2011, participation in Softball leagues in Minnesota was at half of 1994 levels
- » Basketball participation has seen a 75% decrease since 1994
- » Competition from other fitness options
 - Running/jogging
 - Bicycling
 - Yoga

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Increase in demand for specialized recreation facilities
- » Changing demand for traditional sports facilities like diamonds and courts
- » Expanded interest in using parks by entrepreneurs for classes or events



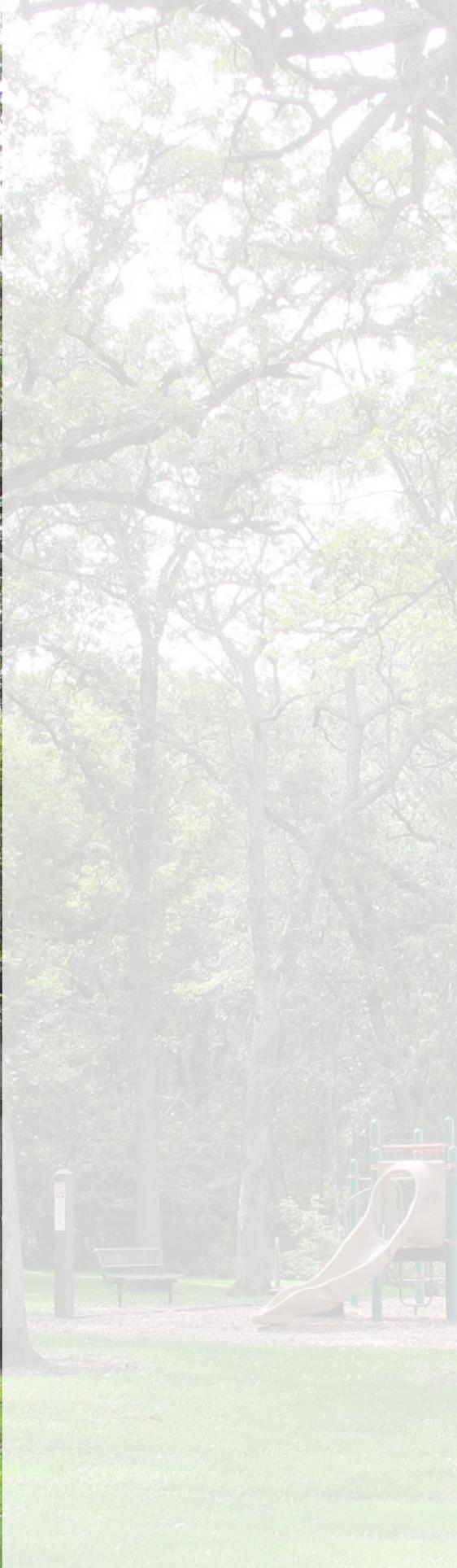
Changing Parks + Rec Trends

Interest in Specialized Facilities + New/Non-Traditional Sports

- » Dog Parks - 39% of US Households own at least one dog
- » Lacrosse – fast-growing high school sport
- » Pickleball has become an alternative to tennis and is particularly popular with Baby Boomers

Implications for Parks & Recreation

- » Requests for additional specialized, single-use facilities
- » Increased coordination needed to accommodate new sports that use similar fields as traditional sports
- » Potential for reduced demand for current athletic facilities



Chapter 3:

Existing Conditions + Needs

The foundation of the system planning process is the examination of existing conditions to determine how well the system is meeting the needs of residents and visitors today and how well it is positioned to meet future needs.

With more than 4,200 acres of city-owned parks, preserves and open space, Rochester offers a wide range of facilities, from ½-acre mini-parks to 300-acre regional parks.

Recreation and gathering facilities are distributed throughout the community to provide users the opportunity to be active; connect with family, friends, and neighbors; and immerse in the natural environment. The community also boasts more than 85 miles of paved trails that provide cross-city connections, as well as recreational loops.

The existing conditions and needs analysis found that Rochester has built an extensive parks and recreation system that generally meets basic needs. Growth in parks and facilities will be needed to meet needs as the community expands. In addition, significant investment is needed to restore aging parts of the system to modern standards.

Rochester in Context

Located in the southeast portion of the state, Rochester is the third largest city in Minnesota and the largest city outside the Twin Cities. It is well-known for its businesses of international significance, especially the Mayo Clinic (Minnesota's largest employer) and IBM-Rochester. The city is within a 3-hour drive from other regional cities, including Minneapolis-St Paul, Madison and Des Moines, and a 1-hour flight from Chicago, Milwaukee and Omaha. As a regional hub, Rochester serves smaller cities in southeastern Minnesota including Faribault, Owatonna, Albert Lea, Austin, and Winona (all within 50 miles). Major thoroughfares connecting Rochester to these regional destinations include Highway 14, I-35, I-90, US 63, and US 52.

Demographic Overview

Population

The 2014-2015 population of Rochester is 106,769 people. Rochester-Olmsted Planning Department projects continued growth in the next 25 years, with the city's population projected to exceed 160,000 residents by 2040.

Age and Gender

Currently Rochester is a relatively youthful city. By age, the largest population segment in Rochester as of 2010 is the 25-29 cohort, followed by the 30-34 cohort. Population projections, however, show an aging population by 2040. The largest percentage growth will be in the 65 to 85 cohort. Younger cohorts age 39 and under will also grow, with the 25-29 cohort projected to be the largest age group. Demographic changes will alter the labor force and also impact preferences for transportation, housing, and park needs. For instance, both millennials and seniors will be seeking walkable neighborhoods and expanded trail facilities.

Race & Ethnicity

Racial and ethnic diversity is increasing in Rochester, with non-whites comprising 18% of the City's population in 2010. The majority of this growth is coming from international migration of minority populations into Rochester rather than from growth of non-white populations already within the City. Eighty-one languages are spoken in the homes of Olmsted County K-12 students, and approximately 18% of households speak a language other than English as the primary language.

Households

In 2010, married couple families still accounted for about half of all households, and 22% of these households include children. However, shifts in household types that started between 2000 and 2010 are expected to

FIGURE 3-2: AGE & GENDER DISTRIBUTION, ROCHESTER 2010

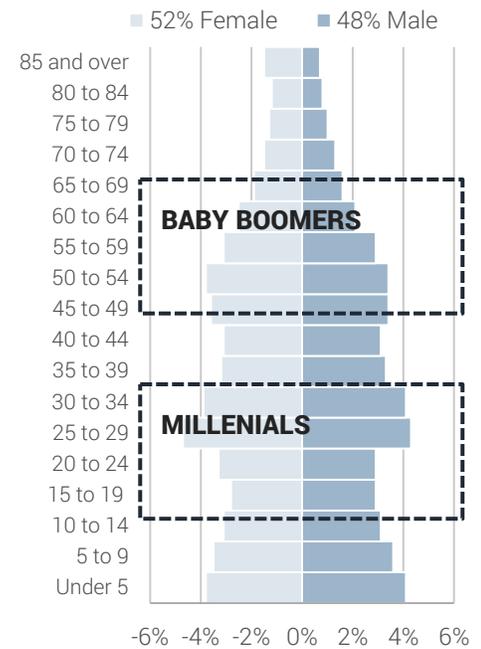
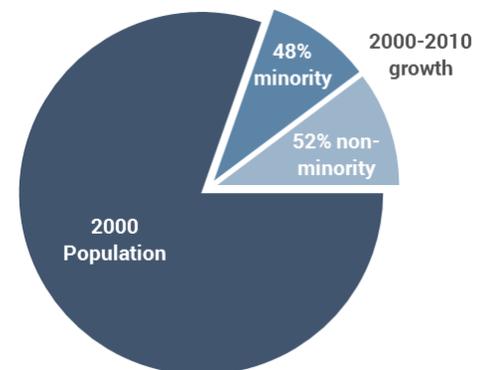


FIGURE 3-3: NET POPULATION GROWTH IN ETHNIC & RACIAL MINORITIES, 2000-2010



continue. This shift includes smaller households, resulting in an increase in the total number of households; an increase in the percentage of married couple, no children households; and an increase in the percentage of households with individuals over 65.

Income

While the median household and median family income for Rochester decreased between 2000 and 2010, Rochester remains an affluent city that enjoys relatively high incomes with 27% of all households and 35% of all family households making over \$100,000. Despite this affluence, if trends related to income and housing costs continue—as assumed by Rochester’s Comprehensive Plan 2040—then Rochester can expect to continue to see an increase in the number of households experiencing a housing cost burden, defined as a household in which more than 30% of household income goes towards housing. This burden is important to monitor as it can lead to a decrease in usage and participation rates for parks and recreation, as well as an increased need for financial assistance.

While the City features a poverty rate that is stable and well below the national poverty rate, consideration still needs to be given to whether the park and recreation system is sufficiently serving those with limited incomes, particularly by providing access to facilities within a walking or biking distance. As described in the box on page 3-X, particular attention was given to whether identified areas had safe, nearby access to playgrounds, open field areas, and basketball courts.

Education

Rochester residents are generally well-educated, with high rates of college and post-graduate attainment. Forty-three percent of residents over 25 years of age hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. Growth in educational attainment levels since 2000 can be attributed to the in-migration of highly educated residents. School enrollment in Rochester has increased across almost all grade levels since 2000.

Visitors

In addition to residents and employees, Rochester’s park and recreation system serves all of the visitors who come to the region for health care, shopping and services, conventions, events, and sports tournaments. Annually, Mayo Clinic serves more than 1.3 million people and their families from all 50 states and more than 140 counties. The Rochester Amateur Sports Commission (RASC) found that in 2015 more than 116,000 people came to the City for tournaments.

System at a Glance

Rochester's Park and Forestry Division maintains 4,400 acres of parkland, including 120 parks, 85 miles of trail, and over 100,000 trees. These facilities provide area residents, employees, and visitors with numerous opportunities for active and passive recreation. The system's natural resources also provide numerous benefits to the community's ecosystem and users' physical and mental health.

Park Classification

Park classifications are used to ensure that a park and recreation system has sufficient diversity and geographic distribution of parks to serve various neighborhood and community needs. In Rochester there are nine types of parks: mini, neighborhood, community, regional, athletic complex, special use, environmental, linear, and golf. Table 3-1 defines and clarifies for each park type the intended use, the area served, the typical size, the types of facilities it may include, and a few examples. Figure 3-4 displays the geographic distribution of each park type, and contains labels for community parks, regional parks, and athletic complexes.

In 2014 three parks – Cascade Lake, Gamehaven, and Quarry Hill Park and Nature Center - achieved regional designation by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC). This designation recognizes the parks' natural settings, regional use, and natural resource based recreational facilities and activities. These designations provide opportunities to seek State Legacy Funding.

Notable Facilities

Rochester Recreation Center

For more than 40 years the Rochester Recreation Center has been a hub for indoor sports and recreation. The facility has an Olympic length swimming pool that meets all AAU and FINA standards and regularly hosts regional swim meets with a 50-meter pool that has 8 swimming lanes, two 3-meter springboards, two 1-meter springboards, and a movable bulkhead that can create two 25-yard swimming areas. The center also has two 85' x 200' ice rinks that serve hockey teams ranging from adults to juniors to youth, as well as the Rochester Figure Skating Club. The multipurpose gymnasium is designed to accommodate one official high school basketball court or one full-size competition volleyball court. Renovations completed in 2015-2016 will create a senior center; update the pool area to improve turnover time and allow simultaneous events; improve lockers; and provide for expanded restrooms, concessions and a secure ticket/administration area.

System Facility Highlights

- » *86 playground areas*
- » *54 diamonds fields (baseball/softball)*
- » *37 rectangular fields (soccer/football/lacrosse/rugby)*
- » *34 tennis courts, including striping for 6 pickleball courts*
- » *34 horseshoe courts*
- » *19 sand volleyball courts*
- » *17 picnic shelters*
- » *15 basketball courts*
- » *12 indoor gyms*
- » *7 outdoor hockey rinks, 6 indoor hockey rinks, and 4 pleasure skating rinks*
- » *2 outdoor pools, 2 beaches, and 1 indoor pool*
- » *4 golf courses with 63 holes*
- » *3 groomed cross country ski trails*
- » *2 dog parks*
- » *2 archery ranges*
- » *2 disc golf courses*
- » *2 garden plot sites*

National Volleyball Center

The National Volleyball Center is a 51,000 square foot, multi-use building located adjacent to Century High School that brings over 15,000 regional visitors to Rochester and hosts numerous local leagues and tournaments. Developed in partnership with the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission, the center was developed for world-class volleyball players with high ceilings, Olympic quality lighting, and a cushioned floor. There are eleven volleyball courts within the Center and three additional courts in Century High School. The center is also routinely used for basketball, badminton, cheerleading, dodgeball, indoor soccer, and pickleball.

Municipal Golf Courses

Rochester has three 18-hole golf courses and one 9-hole course, which is a First Tee Facility. Participation remains steady with more than 79,000 rounds played in 2015. The golf courses, which are distributed throughout the City, include:

- » Eastwood, 3505 Eastwood Road SE, offers a fully equipped Pro Shop, driving range, golf cart rentals, club rentals, food service, golf lessons, and Men's and Women's clubs.

TABLE 3-1: PARK CLASSIFICATION TABLE

Classification	Use	Service Area	Location	Size (typical)	Facilities (examples)	Examples
Mini	Address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	1/4 mile radius, uninterrupted by highways or freeways	Easily accessible to neighborhood residents with safe walking and biking access.	1 acre	Playground, seating	Baihly Heights Tot Lot, Good Shephard
Neighborhood	Primary recreation facility to meet the day-to-day needs of neighborhoods. Provides active recreation and informal gathering spaces for families and groups of neighbors. Fields are sized for practice/youth games.	1/2 mile radius, free of major barriers such as highways or waterways	Easily accessible to neighborhood residents with safe walking and biking access.	2 to 15 acres	Playground, open/rectangular play field, diamond field, tennis court, sand volleyball, hockey/pleasure skating, small picnic shelter, restrooms, etc.	Goose Egg, Nachreiner, Weatherstone
Community	Provides facilities serving the community with programmed, active recreation areas and access to natural areas. May serve regional visitors, although not as primary function.	Community wide in strategic, consolidated locations at a few sites	Sited to be accessible to community and take advantage of natural amenities. Accessible by foot, bike, auto, and bus.	15 to 100 acres	Neighborhood park facilities, basketball, aquatics, multi-purpose facilities, skate park, disc golf, trails, natural areas, large picnic shelters, restrooms, etc.	Soldiers Memorial Field, Silver Lake, Foster Arend
Regional	Areas that provide natural resource-based setting and activities that draw visitors from beyond the City.	Community and Regional Draw	Sited based on natural resource features. Automobile parking provided. Connected to trails to serve foot and bike.	>100 acres	Neighborhood park and community park facilities appropriate for natural setting.	Quarry Hill, Cascade Lake, and Gamehaven Reservoir
Athletic Complex	Provides organized athletic fields and associated facilities for youth athletics and adult/regulation-sized fields. May include neighborhood-park functions.	Community wide in strategic, consolidated locations at a few sites	Connected to trails and sidewalks. Automobile parking provided.	10+ acres	Athletic fields, concessions, playgrounds, trails, restrooms, etc.	Fuad Monsour Sports Complex, McQuillan Field
Special Use	Areas primarily serving a single-use activity	Community & Regional Draw	Site specific.	Varies	Dog park, community garden, indoor recreation/gathering facility, stadium	Pipsqueaks/United Way, Mayo Field, Graham Arena
Environmental	Areas focused on the provision of natural environments, passive recreation, and ecological education.	Community & Regional Draw	Centered around natural resources and amenities.	Varies	Natural areas, trails, restrooms, etc.	Willow Creek Reservoir, Prairie Crossings
Linear	Areas preserved to link park components together.	Community Wide in strategic locations at a few sites	Centered around natural resources and trail corridors	Varies	Trails, Landscaped Areas	Maywood Corridor, Elton Hills Run
Golf	Areas dedicated to golf, including golf courses, driving ranges, and clubhouses	Community and Regional Draw	Sited to be accessible to community and take advantage of natural amenities. Accessible by foot, bike, auto, and bus.	Varies	See use.	Eastwood Golf Course

- » Soldiers Field, 244 East Soldiers Field Drive, is a classic course in downtown Rochester that offers a Golf Shop, golf cart rentals, club rentals, food service, golf lessons, and leagues.
- » Northern Hills, 4721 West Circle Drive NW, offers a fully equipped Pro Shop, driving range, golf cart rentals, club rentals, food service, golf lessons, leagues, and junior golf camps.
- » Hadley Creek Golf Course and Learning Center, 2447 Hadley Valley Road NE, has been designated a First Tee Facility to support youth 6 to 18 in the game of golf. The facility offers nine-hole golf course, driving range, putting greens, and golf lessons. Over 450 Rochester youth attended golf classes and an additional 600 individuals participated in one day training sessions.
- » Rochester's golf courses also provide a location for winter activities. Trails are groomed for cross country skiing at both Eastwood and Soldiers Field with the sites also hosting high school events in the fall.

Plummer House of the Arts

Plummer House of the Arts is a historic home that serves as a tourist attraction, a facility for weddings, receptions, meetings, instructional classes, and parties for groups up to 100 people. The site includes 11 acres of beautiful landscaped grounds and formal gardens. Public access to the grounds is available sunrise to sunset except if private functions have rented the grounds.

Graham Arena

The Graham Arena Complex is owned by Olmsted County but is managed and operated by the City of Rochester Park & Recreation Department. The complex, consisting of four large arenas, is located at the Olmsted County Fairgrounds and hosts fair events from mid-July through August. From October through June, indoor and outdoor ice is available for youth and adult hockey, figure skating, and broomball. Off-ice events occurring between March and September include trade and exhibit shows, arts and craft fairs, concerts, agricultural and livestock events, rodeos, and car shows. The arena also hosts its share of weddings.

Pipsqueaks

Pipsqueaks is Rochester's indoor play zone designed for children kindergarten-aged and younger. A community partnership between Rochester Park and Recreation and the United Way of Olmsted County Inc., Pipsqueaks is located in the gymnasium of the United Way at 903 West

FIGURE 3-4: ALL CITY PARKS

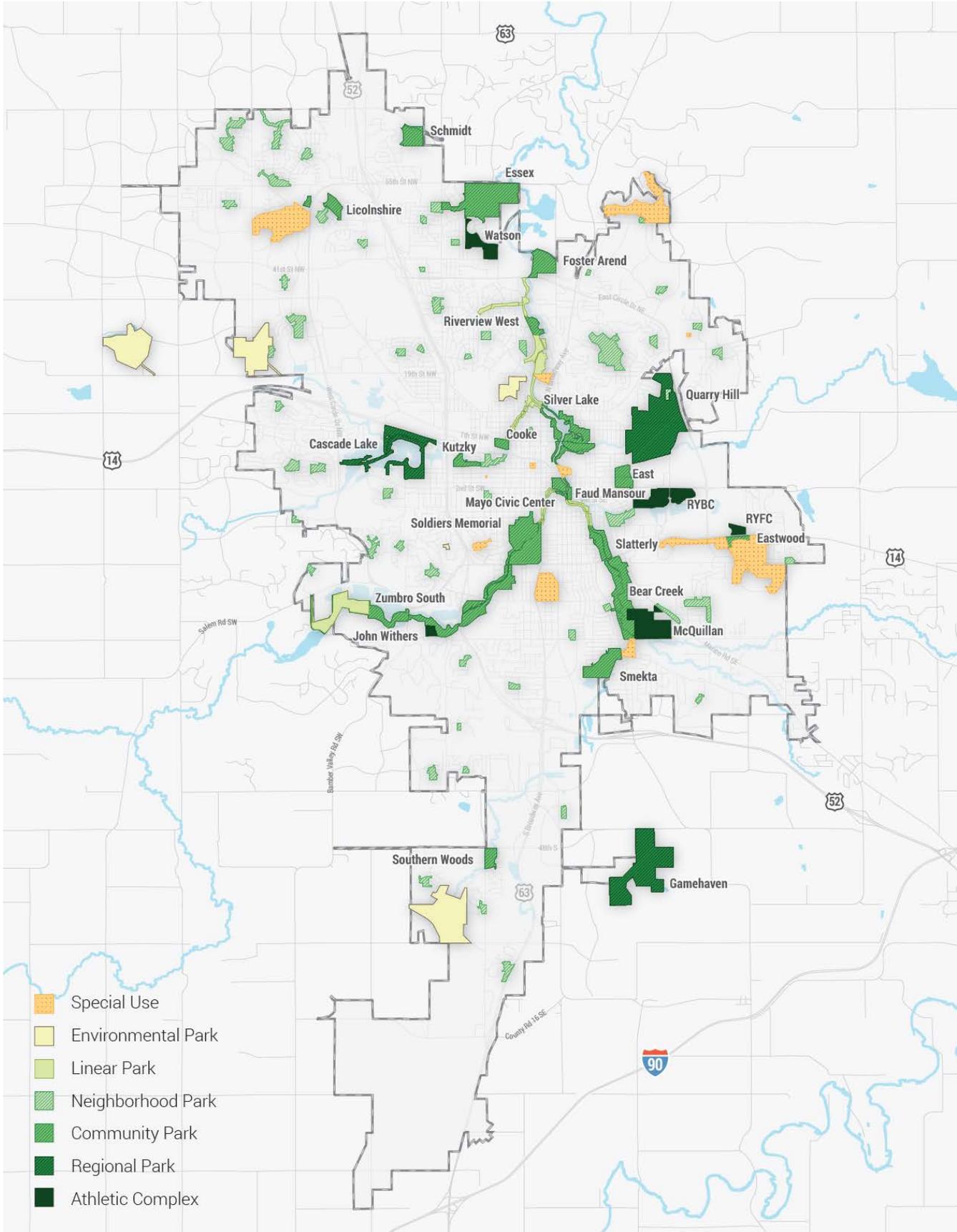


FIGURE 3-5: NOTABLE CITY FACILITIES

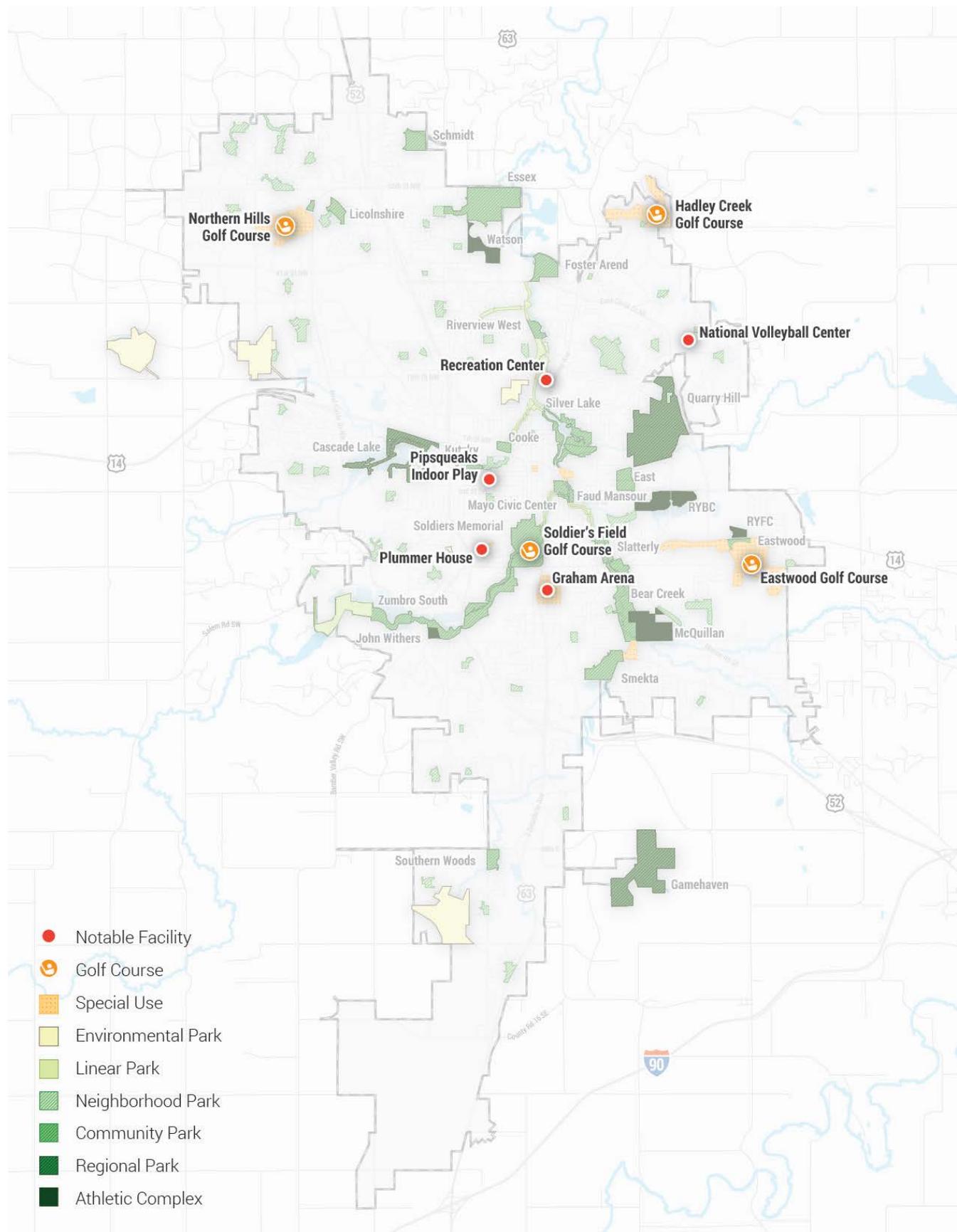
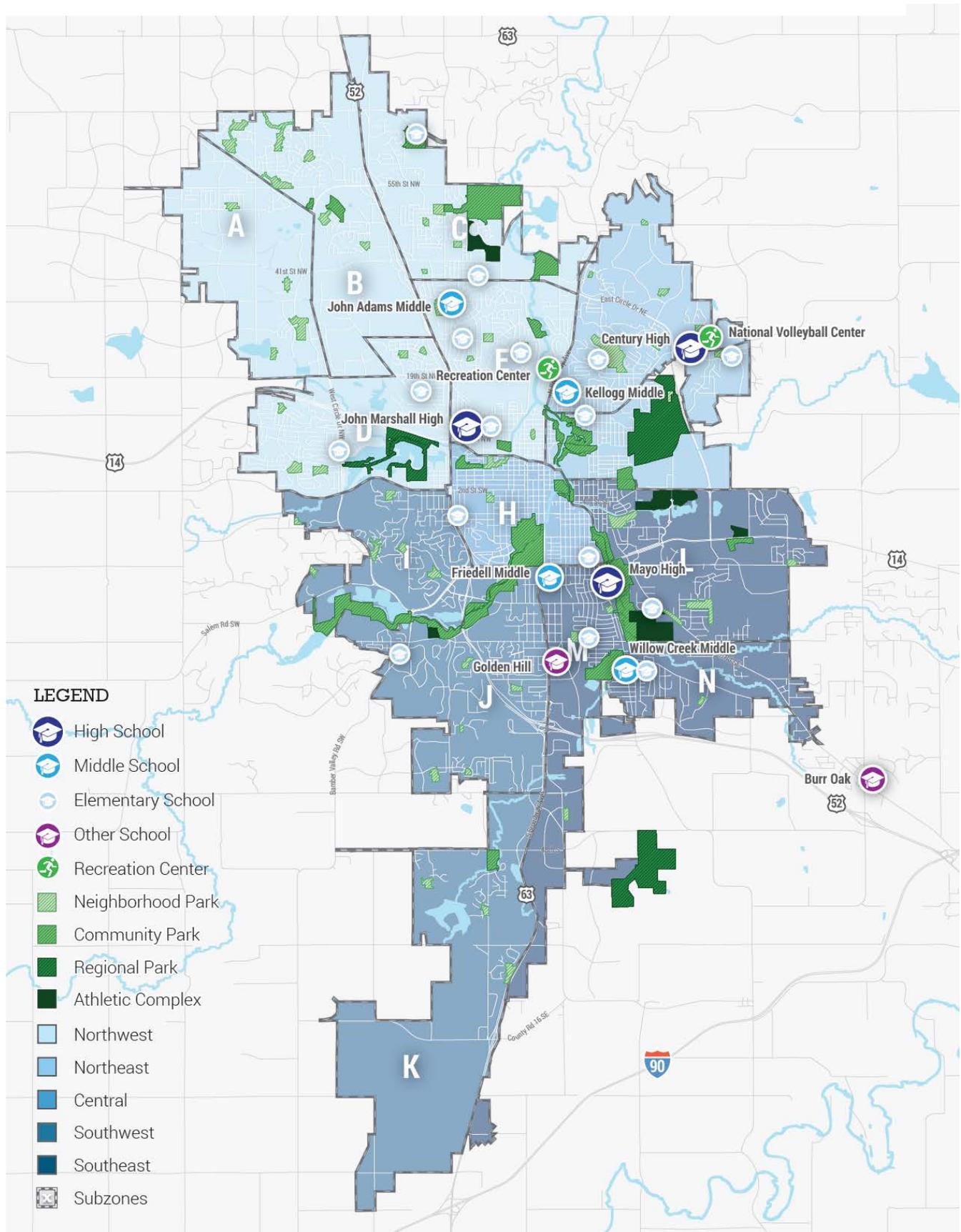


FIGURE 3-6: ROCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRIBUTION



Center Street, and is generally open from November to April so families have a place to go indoors in the winter months. Pipsqueaks can be rented for private birthday parties and special occasions.

Reservoirs

Rochester has seven reservoirs specifically designed and constructed as part of the City's Flood Control Project. These reservoirs are intended to store rainfall in the upper portions of the South Zumbro Watershed. Management of these reservoirs is part of the Park and Recreation System. While the primary role for these reservoirs is flood control, they are also available for recreation.

Other Community/County Facilities

Mayo Civic Center

The Mayo Civic Center is Southeastern Minnesota's largest event center. Known for its warm hospitality and full-service flexibility, the Center provides first-rate facilities for conventions, sporting events, entertainment, and social events. Beautiful Mayo Park, with patios, walkways, and 8 acres of tranquil green space, overlooks the Zumbro River, and is often used for both public and private events.

Rochester Schools

An analysis of a park and recreation system would not be complete without recognition of the value provided by school facilities and programming. Rochester Public Schools is the 7th largest district in the state with more than 17,000 students and an attendance area of 218 square miles. It includes 17 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 3 high schools, and an alternative learning center. The City of Rochester and Rochester Public Schools collaborate in many areas, including the National Volleyball Center and recreational programming.

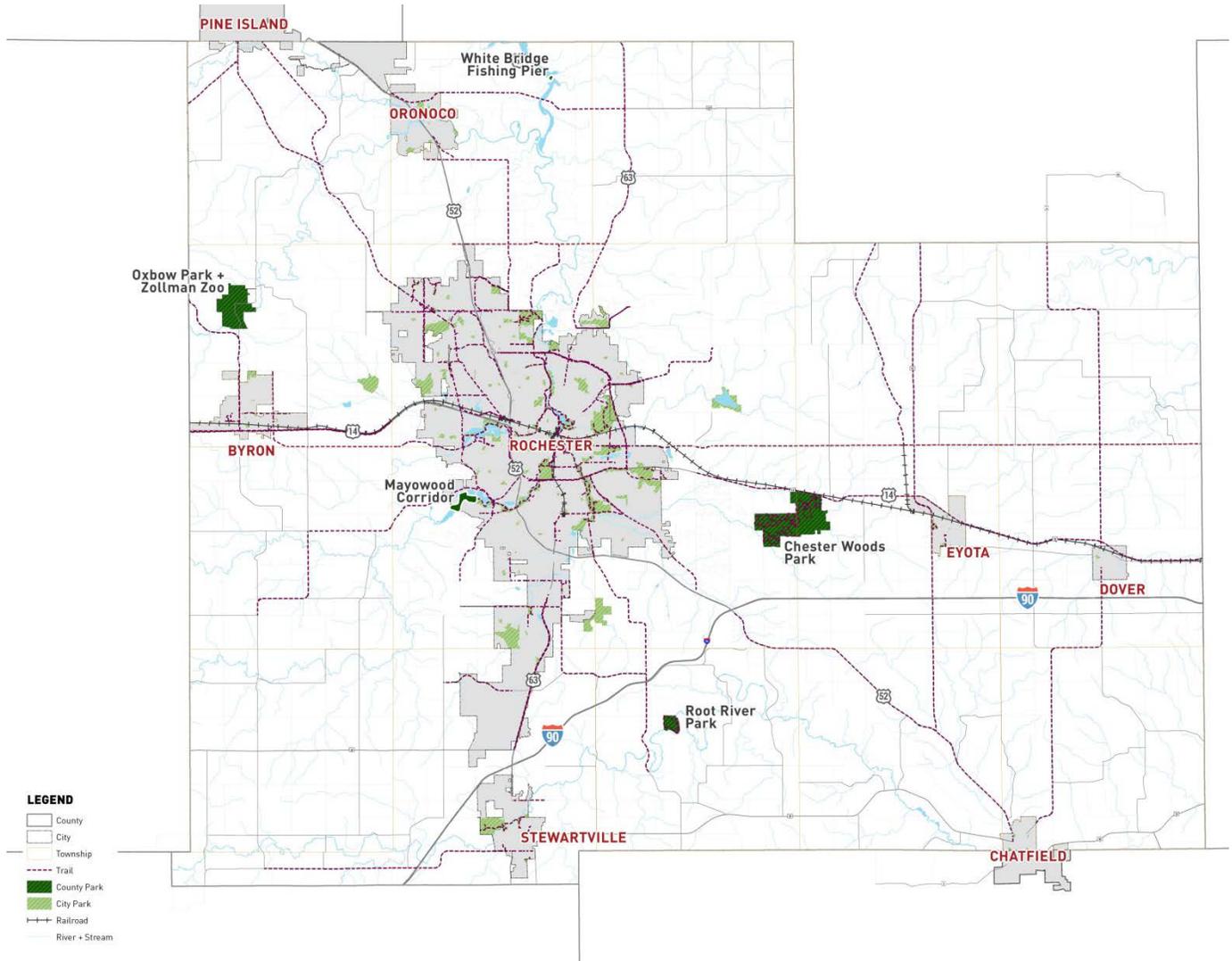
Rochester school district facilities supplement the park and recreation system and are considered when individual park development decisions are made. Given that use priorities for school facilities are given to youth sports and activities, planning for the park and recreation system cannot assume availability of any individual school facility to serve general community needs over the long-term.

Olmsted County

Olmsted County has more than 2,000 acres of park and open space land in five units. The mission of Olmsted County Parks is "to foster an appreciation of the natural world through environmental education, natural resource management, and public participation in the stewardship of our park lands." The permanent park staff of 11 is supplemented with an equal number of seasonal employees and more than 25,000 volunteer hours.

The five units of the Olmsted County Park System include:

FIGURE 3-7: OLMSTED COUNTY FACILITY DISTRIBUTION



- » Chester Woods, the largest at 1,300 acres, is located 7 miles east of Rochester along Highway 14. It includes a campground, swimming beach, fishing, boat rental, picnicking, hunting, playground, nature play area, and trails for horseback riding and hiking.
- » Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo, located north of Byron, is over 600 acres and includes the Zollman Zoo, a nature center, campground, playgrounds, nature play area, picnicking, and hiking trails.
- » Root River, located southeast of Rochester, is the newest Olmsted County unit and has 125 acres. The site is under development and currently consists of trails for horseback riding and hiking.
- » Mayowood Corridor is located near Historic Mayowood in southwest Rochester and includes facilities for hiking, biking, and running. While the County owns this corridor, it is operated and maintained by the City of Rochester.
- » White Bridge Fishing Pier is located on Highway 12 between Oronoco and Sandy Point. The site offers handicapped accessible fishing and picnicking.

Needs Assessment

This System Plan is based on a critical evaluation of Rochester's Parks and Recreation System, including analyses of existing conditions, peer communities, national standards and trends, best practices, and community input. These analyses identified current and future needs and desires, which subsequently guided the development of principles, recommendations, priorities, and strategies intended to guide the future of the system.

The evaluation process included:

- » Meetings with the City Staff, Advisory Committee, Park Board, and the City Council
- » Evaluation of the entire system of parks, trails, natural resources, connectivity, programs, and facilities
- » Demographic analysis
- » Evaluation of current park classification system and standards
- » Evaluation of service areas, future growth, and development needs
- » Identification of issues and opportunities at a system-wide level
- » Comparison of existing supply, quality, and distribution of features and facilities to national standards, and to peer communities
- » Evaluation of emerging trends influencing future needs of the system

Community Input

To best serve the residents of Rochester, an understanding of their needs and desires regarding parks and recreation was an essential component of the planning process. Community input was gathered to identify satisfaction with the existing park system, the level of park and recreation use, opinions on the system's needs, issues, and priorities, and desires for future system development. A number of collection methods were employed throughout the planning process, resulting in fundamental feedback that helped shape both this plan and the future of Rochester's parks and recreation. Key findings from the initial outreach in the fall of 2015 are summarized below. Outreach conducted in the spring of 2016 resulted in direct changes to the system plan.

Resident and stakeholder outreach methods included:

- » Community Open House to collect input (October 15, 2015)
- » Listening sessions with key stakeholder groups (October 22, 2015)
- » Online community questionnaire (November 2015)
- » Community Open House to affirm plan direction (April 28, 2016)
- » Online community questionnaire to evaluate proposed direction (May 2016)

Listening Session Key Findings

A series of seven listening sessions were held with 25 stakeholder representatives (of 75+ invited groups) in the areas of arts, nature/environment, indoor sports, outdoor field/court sports, outdoor adventures sports, and diversity.

Key findings from this community engagement effort include:

- » Partnerships between Parks and Recreation and community organizations continue to grow
- » Marketing/brand awareness is needed
- » Direction is needed on natural areas
- » Facilities are aging or are insufficient for needs
- » Recreational needs continue to evolve and expand
- » Outreach to minority/ethnic groups is needed
- » The community enjoys strong recreation associations

Online Questionnaire Key Findings

The October online questionnaire generated 2,186 responses from community members, including more than 3,200 individual comments.

Upon analyzing these responses, the following key findings emerged:

- » General satisfaction with the system but room for improvement
- » Recognition that maintenance/upgrading of facilities needed
- » Desire for improving existing system rather than significant expansion
- » Additional needs in recreation programming – swimming currently most utilized program
- » Upkeep concerns around cleanliness and trail/sidewalk repair
- » Most used facilities include trails, quarry hill, and community/neighborhood parks
- » Desire for more natural areas

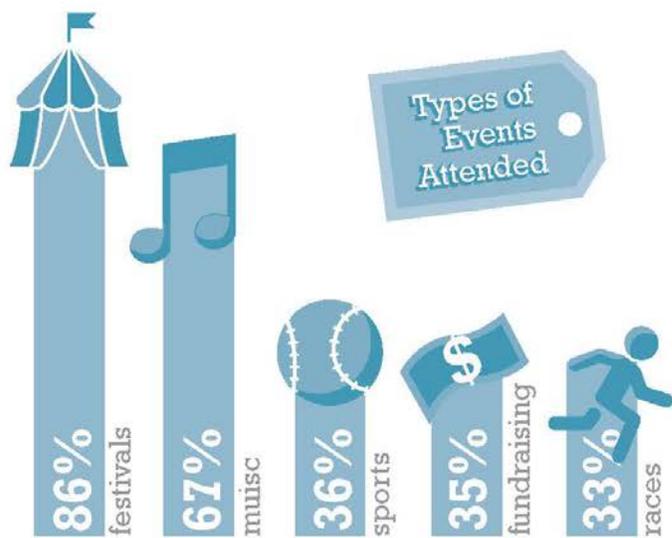
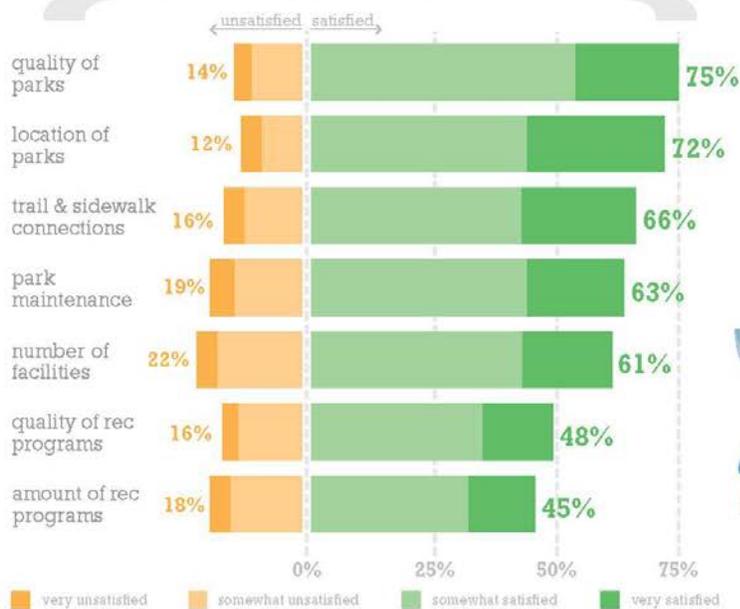
A more detailed look at the results of the initial online questionnaire can be found in Figure 3-8 and Figure 3-9.

FIGURE 3-8: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY, PAGE 1

Rochester Parks & Recreation
November 2015 Community Survey

72% satisfied overall
15% unsatisfied with Rochester Parks & Recreation

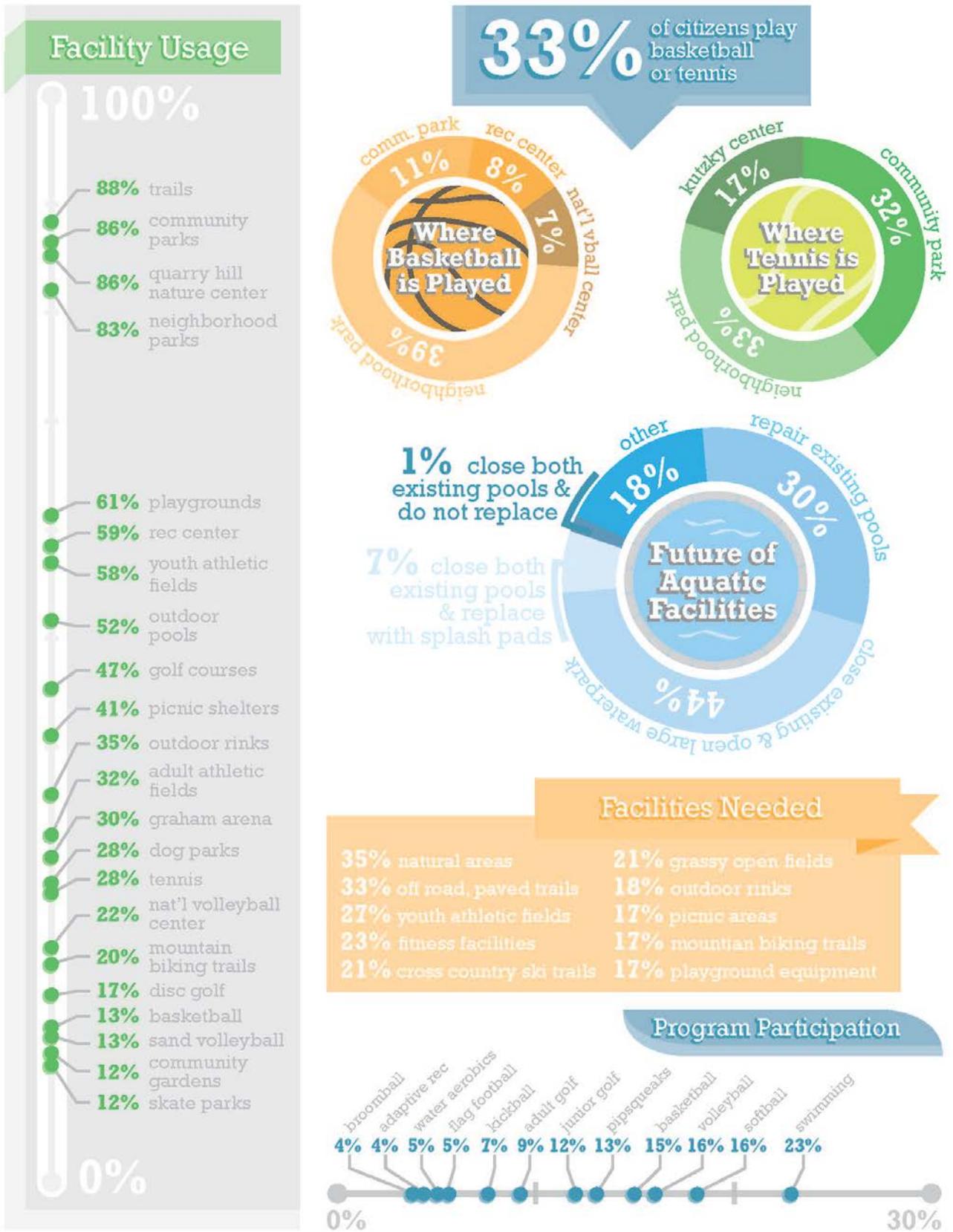
- Top Priorities**
- 30% better maintenance of existing facilities
 - 27% add amenities in existing parks
 - 26% more paved trails
 - 24% more indoor rec facilities
 - 22% more natural areas
 - 20% more youth athletic fields
 - 20% development of water splash pad for children



System Upkeep Ratings



FIGURE 3-9: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE SUMMARY, PAGE 2



System Condition

Rochester's Parks and Recreation System has been developing over the last 150 years. Individual parks range from new and high-quality to older and in need of reinvestment. Discussions throughout the planning process indicate that the system is in need of significant investment to meet the expectations of users. While there are no facilities in unsafe conditions, deferred maintenance and investment has resulted in facilities that are not up to modern standards. Routine upkeep ensures that there are not a large number of individual complaints, but does not result in great admiration for the park system. In particular, the system's restrooms, shelters, and aquatic facilities are in need of major reinvestment. Investments are also being requested for Mayo Field, the baseball/softball complexes, and tennis center to ensure their competitiveness for the tournament marketplace.

System Components

Zones + Subzones

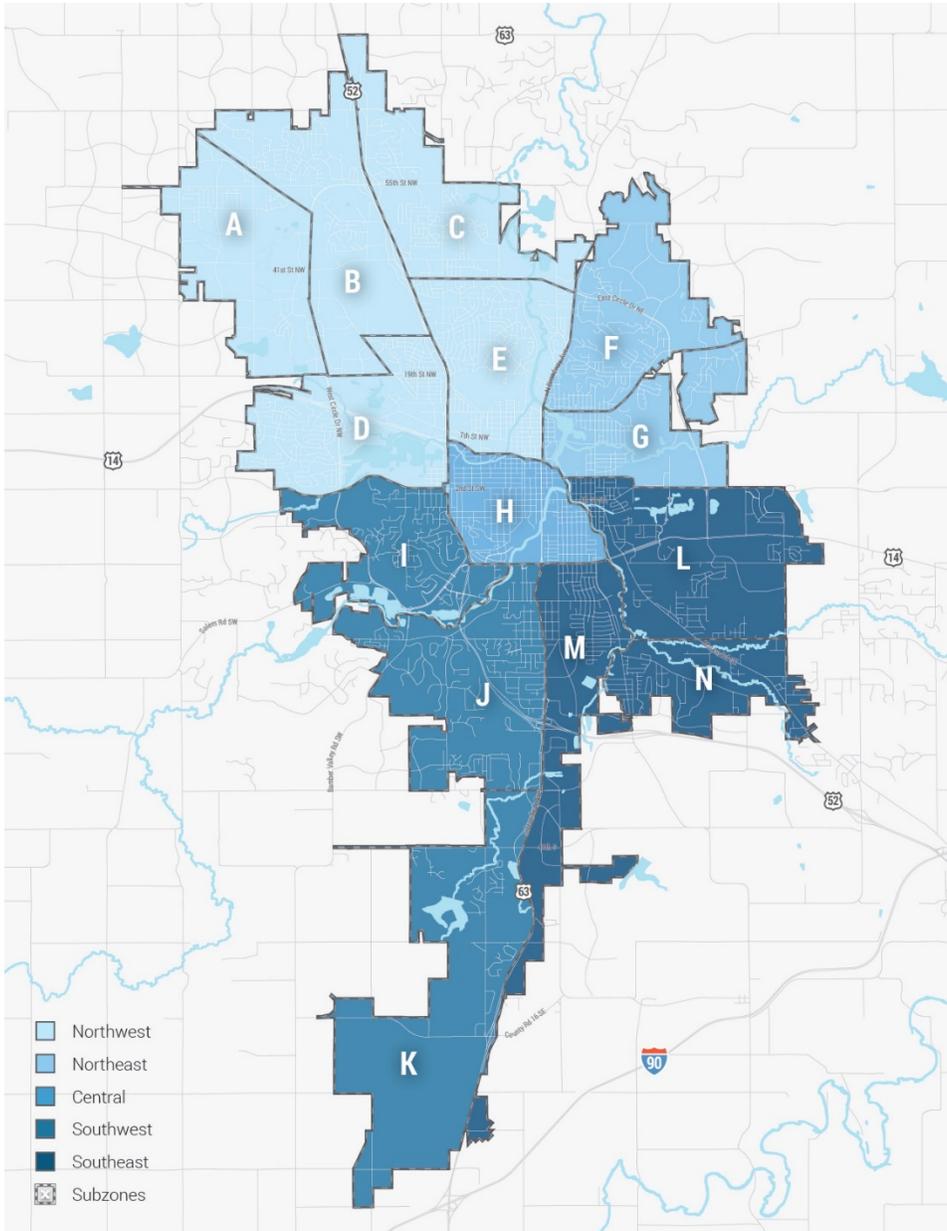
To assist in ensuring system components are distributed equitably across the City, a system of park zones and subzones were created. The zones were developed recognizing the uniqueness of the central core of the community and the park dedication ordinance which requires that land and funds dedicated within an area must stay within that general area. The five zones therefore consist of central, northwest, northeast, southeast, and southwest (see Figure 3-10). Subzones further divide the zones using connectivity barriers like roadways and waterways. Zones and subzones are used throughout the recommendations to identify how frequent a specific should be within the system.

Parks

There are currently 120 parks throughout the City of Rochester, providing 31.6 acres of park for every 1,000 residents. The current number of parks and park acreage is adequate for Rochester's existing population, but it will not be able to meet the needs of the expected population growth in the next 10 to 20 years.

A comparison with peer communities finds that Rochester is similar in its number of parks and may have slightly more acres of parkland than other, similarly sized communities. An analysis of service gaps of neighborhood and community/regional parks found that the City has succeeded in ensuring most residents are within a reasonable walking or biking distance of a park. Service gaps primarily exist on the edges of the community and should be able to be addressed as the community grows.

FIGURE 3-10: ZONES + SUBZONES



While Rochester has a good system of neighborhood parks, community input indicates a desire to make the parks more distinctive. This could be accomplished through the inclusion of more natural features, public art, or ensuring that parks have a different mix of recreational facilities.

FIGURE 3-11: NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS DISTRIBUTION & GAP ANALYSIS

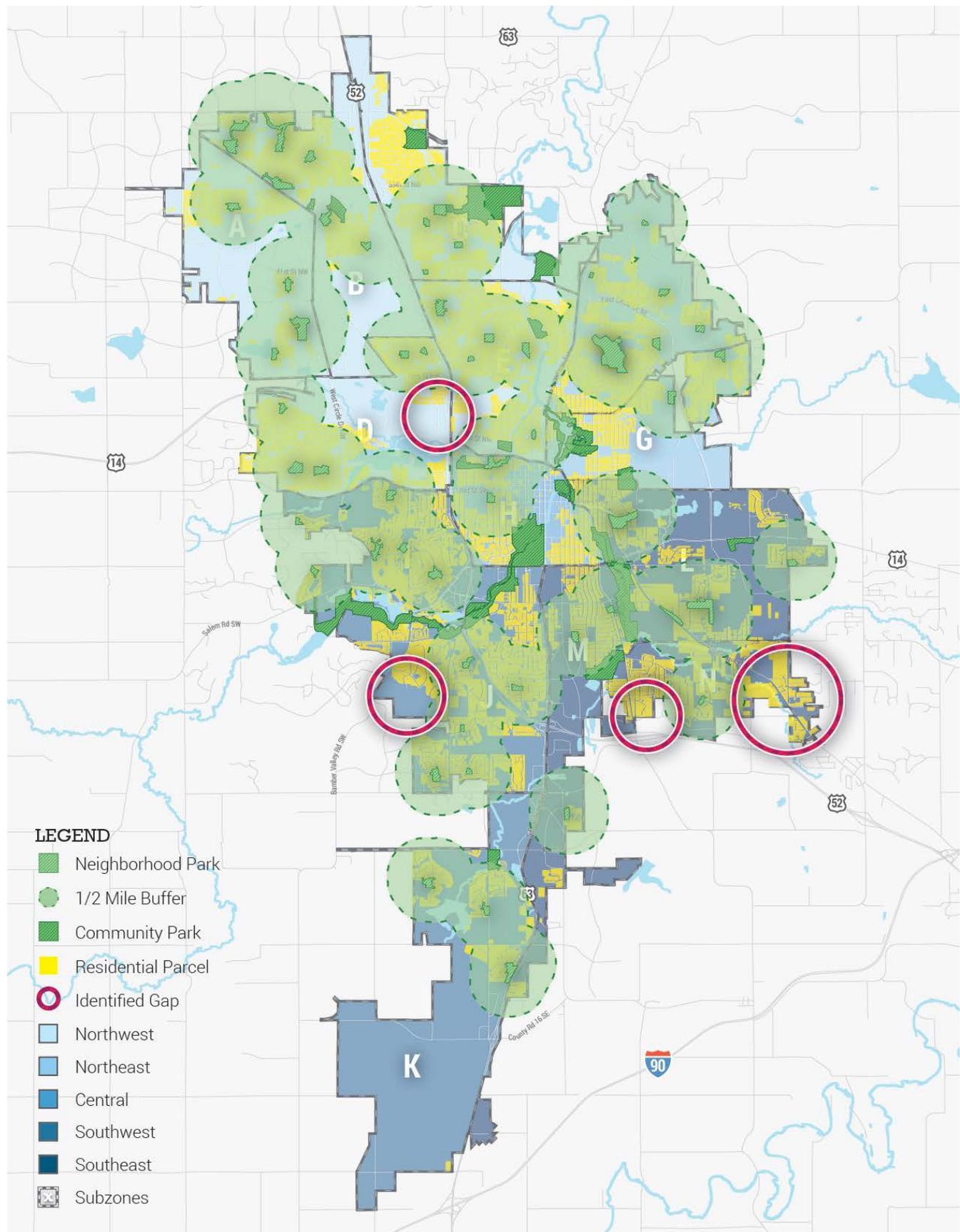
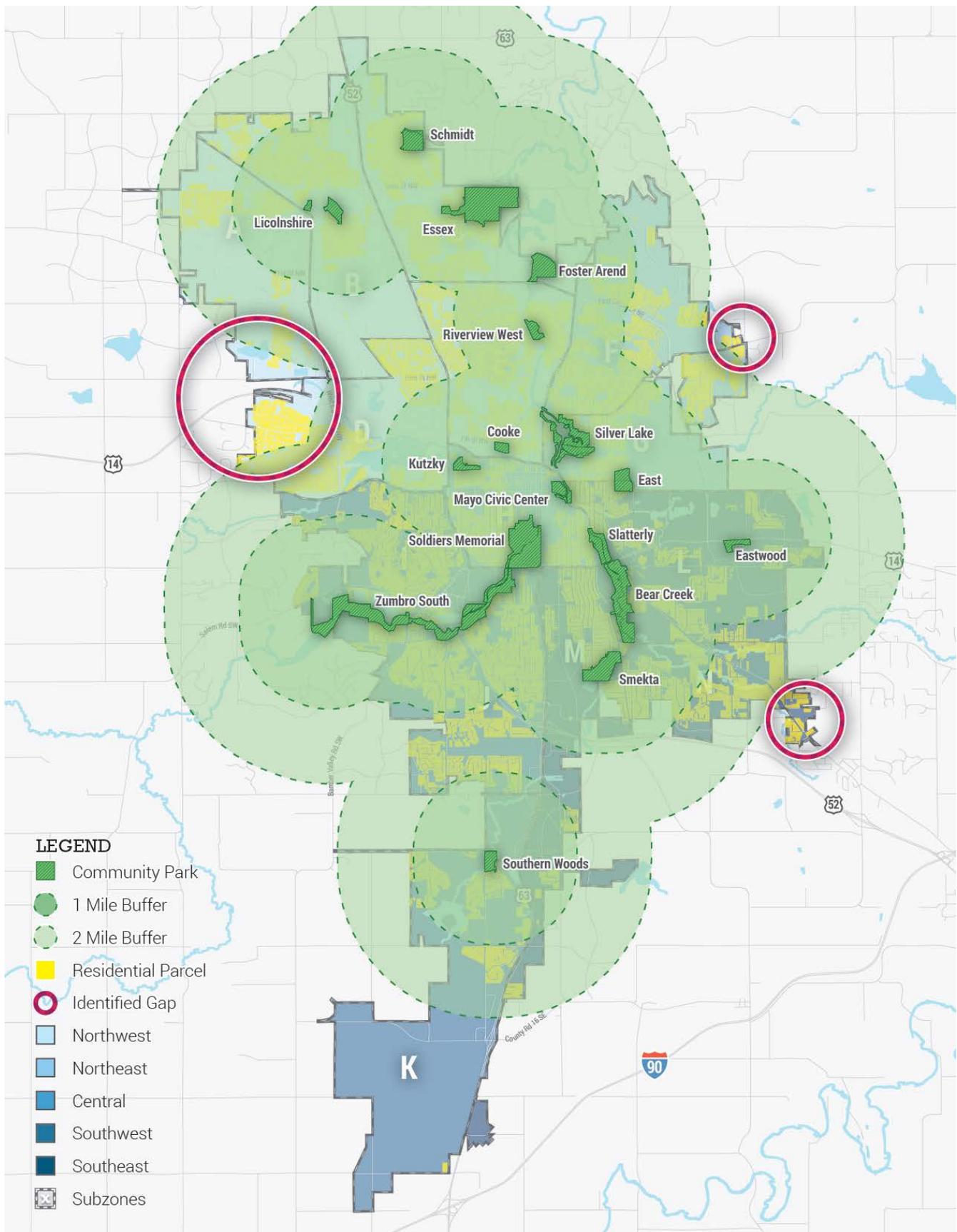


FIGURE 3-12: COMMUNITY PARKS DISTRIBUTION & GAP ANALYSIS



Facilities

Rochester provides a wide range of recreational facilities throughout its system. According to national standards and peer community comparisons, the number of facilities is generally adequate for the city's current size. Additional facilities will be needed as the city grows to ensure there are sufficient facilities per capita and to ensure that facilities are within a reasonable distance of expanding areas. ADA accessibility, which is provided in some places, also needs to be expanded moving forward to meet the needs of present and future residents.

An analysis of how facilities are distributed throughout the City found that most residential areas have a playground within a reasonable walking or biking distance. For efficiency, care should be taken to ensure future playgrounds are not placed too close together. More than 25% of the City's playgrounds are over 20 years old. Replacement should be a focus to ensure equipment is safe. As replacements and upgrades occur, consideration should also be given to adding naturalized playscapes to diversify the types of playgrounds in the community.

An examination of traditional athletic facilities finds that diamond fields for baseball and softball are distributed throughout the city, with most locations having only 1 or 2 fields. This distribution ensures fields are in close proximity to neighborhoods, but does reduce efficiency in maintenance and operations for both the city and the sports associations.

In contrast, the city's tennis courts tend to be located closer in the core area, with Kutzky Park having a significant concentration. This distribution limits the ability of users to have a tennis court convenient to their neighborhood.

While basketball courts are distributed throughout the community, there are gaps in the southeast of the City. The City is currently exploring transitioning the location of basketball courts from neighborhood parks to community parks. This transition is to address noise and parking issues associated with basketball courts. The transitioning process will provide an opportunity for the city to revise court locations to ensure they are distributed adequately throughout the community.

Overall, the mix of facilities needs upgrading to incorporate both current needs and needs driven by emerging trends such as the growth in underrepresented populations. Examples might include additional dog parks, indoor facilities, community gardens, lacrosse fields, and pickleball courts. Some of these specialized facilities will require major capital improvements to achieve (i.e. pools, tennis courts, golf clubhouse, etc.).

FIGURE 3-14: DIAMOND FIELD DISTRIBUTION

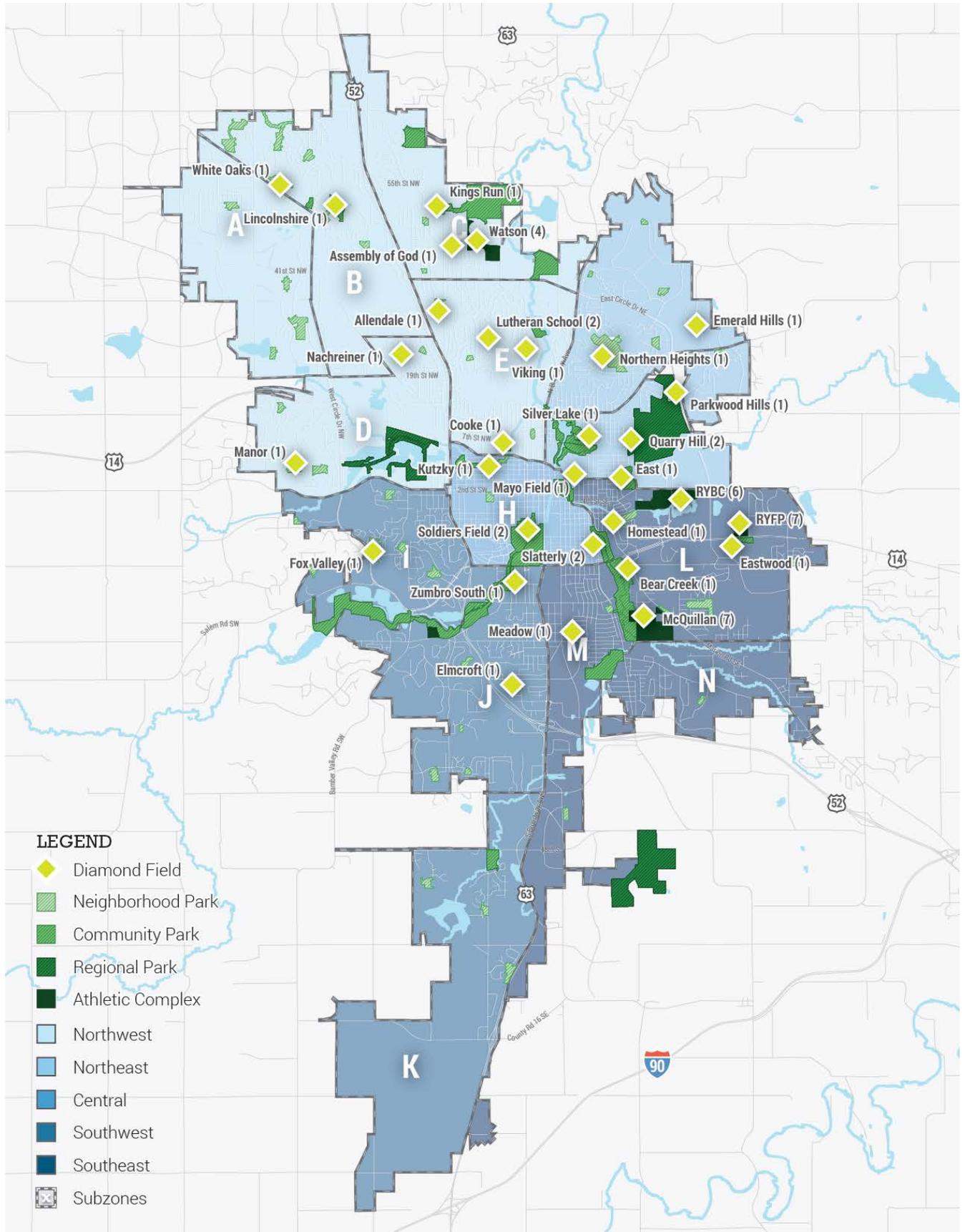
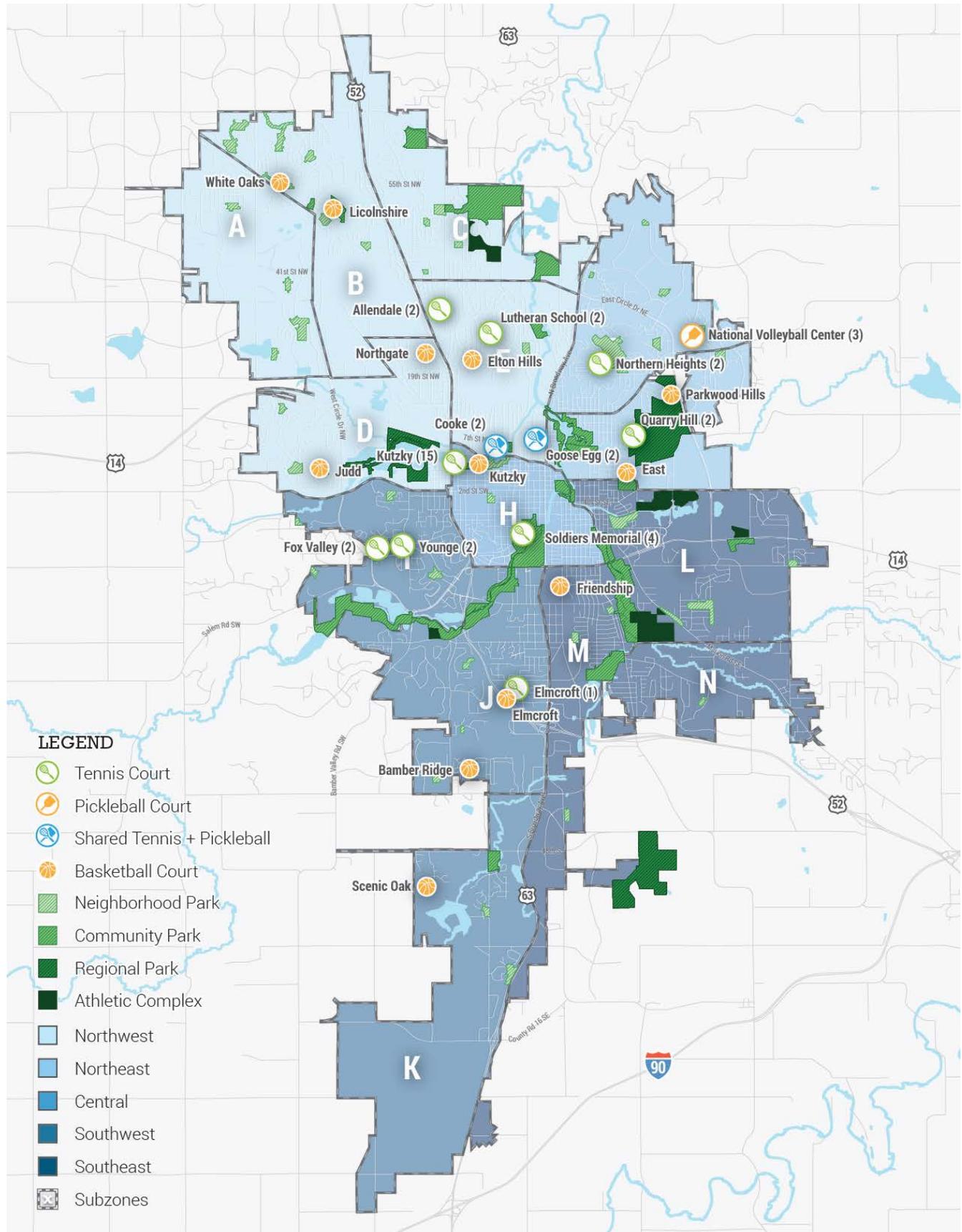


FIGURE 3-15: TENNIS, PICKLEBALL, & BASKETBALL DISTRIBUTION



Trails

The City's trail and sidewalk system is a great asset to the park and recreation system. The system is managed by a cooperative effort between the Parks and Recreation Department (for trails on park property) and Public Works (for trails along roadways). The fall 2015 survey found that 86% of respondents have used a trail in the last year, the highest for any facility in the system. The system planning process did find that there are areas in which trail surfaces are in poor condition and significant investment is needed to bring the system back to acceptable condition. Additionally, while there are either trails or sidewalks in every zone of the City, there are gaps that could be filled to provide more complete connectivity.

Natural Areas

The City of Rochester has thousands of acres of natural areas throughout the community. These natural areas range in size from small, one-acre remnants in neighborhood parks to the hundreds of acres surrounding the city's reservoirs. Participants in the system planning process expressed interest in enhancing the quality and management of existing natural areas, preserving additional natural areas, and improving access to both new and existing areas. There is a desire as the community grows to utilize natural areas as green corridors to enhance connections within the City's park system and to connect to natural areas outside of Rochester's boundaries.

The Quarry Hill Park and Nature Center is a prized and highly utilized amenity in Rochester. A perfect example of Rochester's partnerships, Quarry Hill is a collaborative effort between the Friends of Quarry Hill Nature Center, the City of Rochester, Rochester Public Schools, and many other organizations in the community and region. With 329 acres, the park features diverse wild communities and one of the largest nature centers in the state of Minnesota. The center promotes hands-on natural science education, active living, and life-long appreciation of nature. As the hub for environmental programming, Quarry Hill is in need of additional investment, and improvements have already begun in 2016. As it is currently the only location with consistent, nature-based programming, additional locations for nature-based programming could be considered to improve distribution and help meet future demand.

FIGURE 3-16: CITY TRAILS

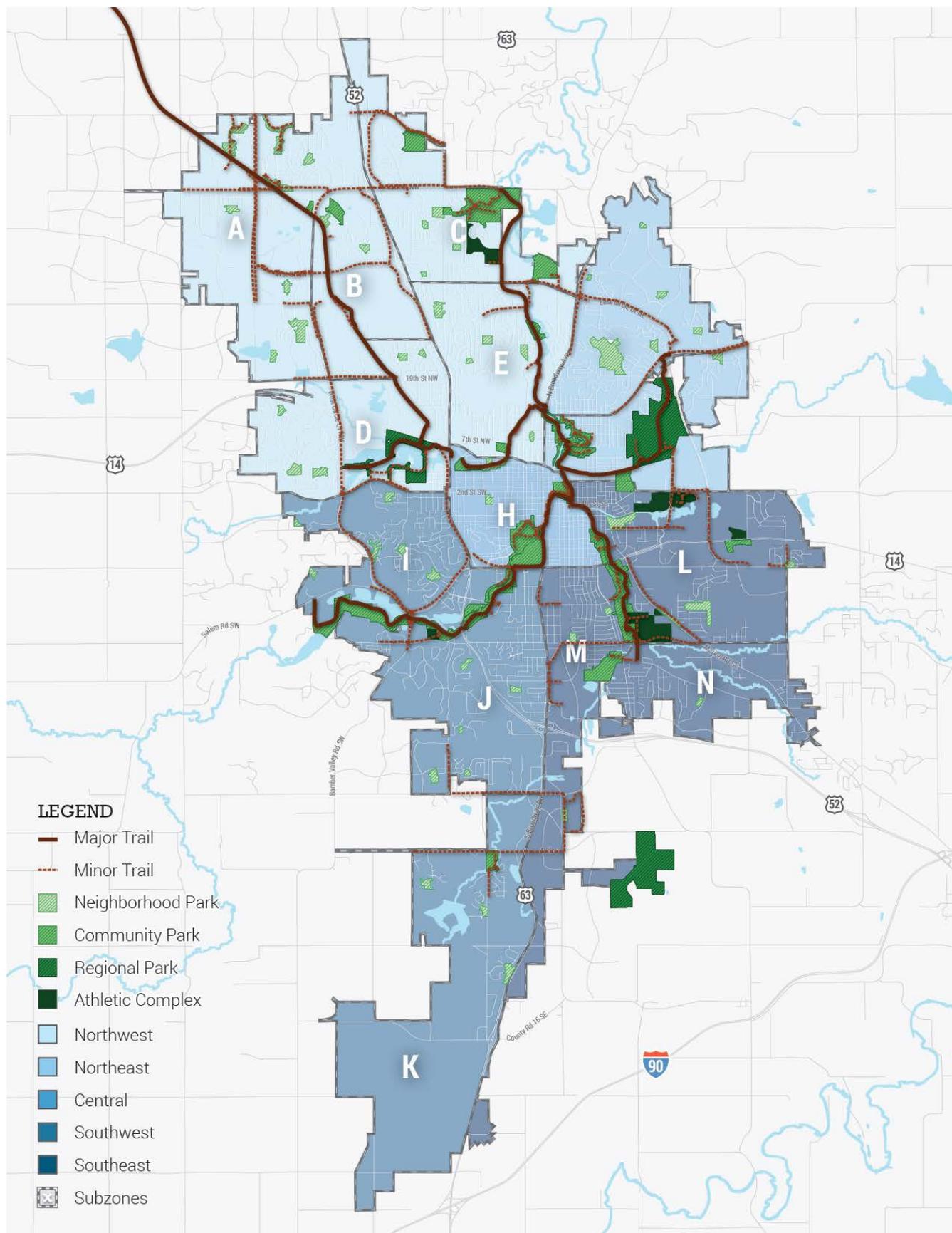
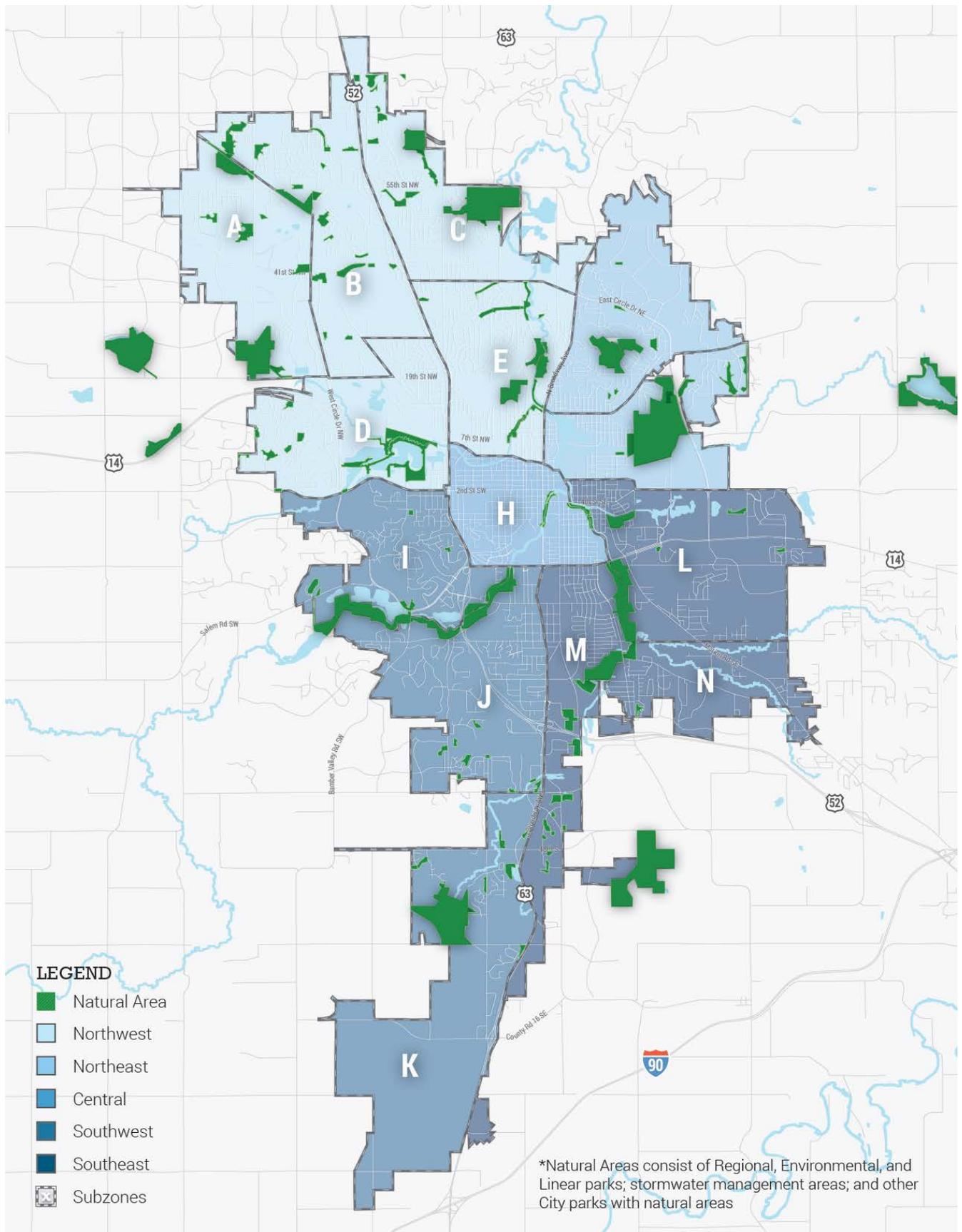


FIGURE 3-17: NATURAL AREAS OF 20+ ACRES



Programming

While there are many recreation-related programming opportunities available throughout Rochester, very few are actually administered through the Parks and Recreation Department. This is due to the exceptional working relationship the City maintains with recreation groups and associations, who do a great job of providing a variety of quality programs. Moving forward, the City's role in these programming opportunities should be more defined to ensure the City is being appropriately credited and to avoid confusion regarding who is providing the programming.

Program development and assessment should be conducted to identify participant needs not currently addressed in programming provided by associations and groups. For example, while the festivals and music events are currently very popular, community input indicates a desire to expand arts programming as well as unstructured, family-based, nature-based, and drop-in activities. More integration of technology (i.e. wifi) or additional programming in under-served or underutilized areas could also enhance parks and recreation programming. Increasing volunteerism could assist in expanding programming opportunities, but would require coordination by an increasingly over-worked City Staff.

Operations

Currently, Rochester's Parks and Recreation System is well-managed but insufficiently funded to meet community expectations. Discussions throughout the planning process acknowledge that the department is doing the best it can. However, aging infrastructure means that even well-maintained clean facilities are perceived to be in substandard condition.

As the community has grown the Parks and Recreation Department has outgrown its current facility located next to Mayo Field. Less than 3,000 square feet of space currently houses offices, locker rooms, a conference/meeting room, and a breakroom for 31 permanent staff members and approximately 30 seasonal staff members.

The site is also insufficient to address maintenance and storage needs. Several off-site locations are used to store vehicles, equipment and supplies at Essex Park, Quarry Hill Park, Plummer House, Public Works Traffic Operations Building, Judd Park, Watson Field, Faud Sports Complex, and West Silver Lake.

A review of department financing over the last 30 years shows that the Parks and Recreation Department has been doing more with less. While the community has grown 72% in population since 1980, the Parks and Recreation Department has only been able to increase its staffing by 20%, and this includes staffing for additional, non-traditional responsibilities like flood control and parkway/landscaping maintenance.

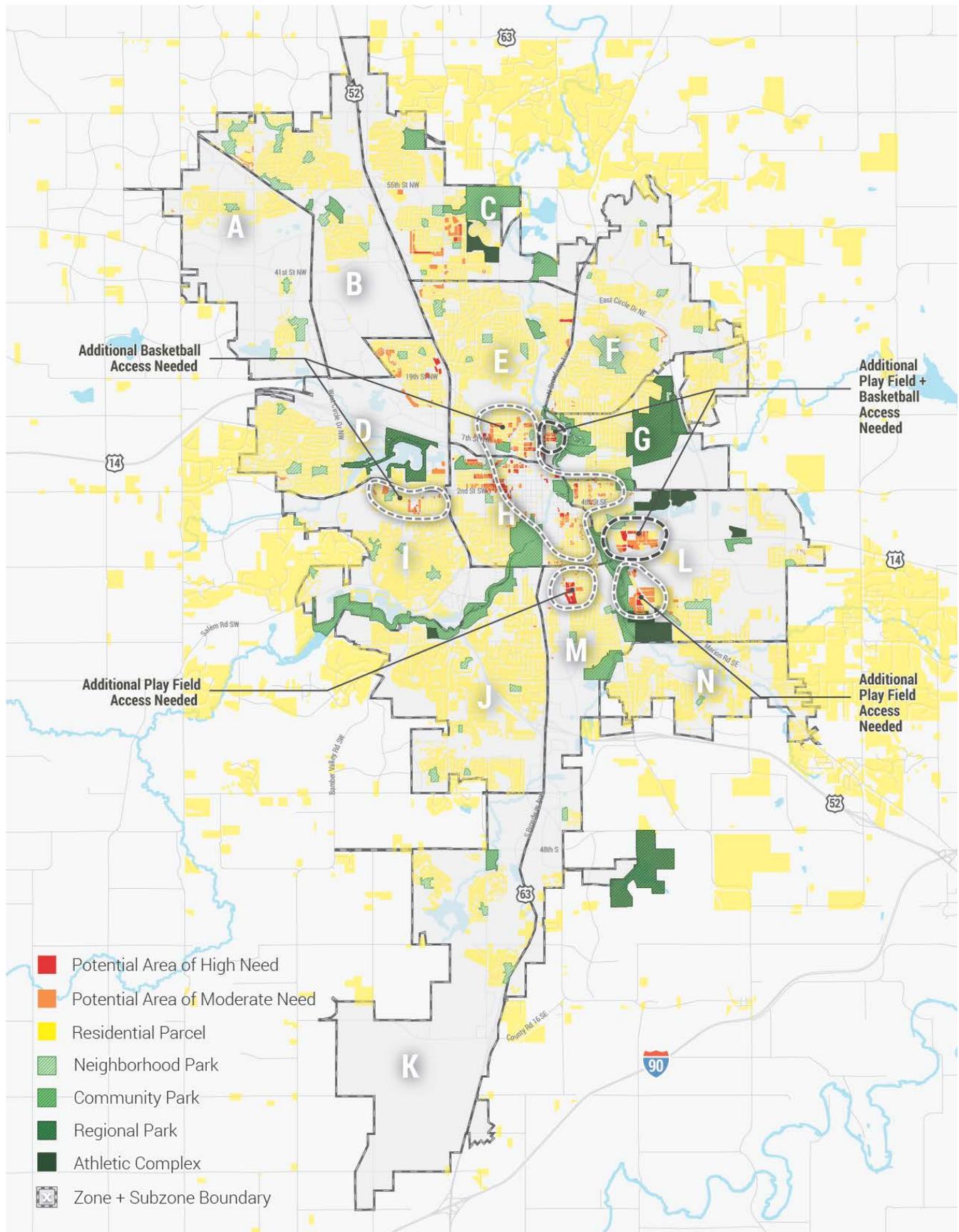
Volunteers contribute more than 15,000 hours annually to the Parks and Recreation Department. While additional volunteers could be used to

support parks and recreation, current staffing does not have the capacity to oversee a significant increase.

Areas of Need

As part of the needs assessment, the planning process evaluated the accessibility of parks and facilities in areas in which a potentially higher concentration of users may need to walk or ride a bike. The assessment process began by identifying areas of concentrated higher density housing; areas in which household incomes are less than the school district's threshold for free and reduced lunch; and areas in which the household diversity is greater than 30%. Areas of high (where all three characteristics exist) and moderate (where two or more characteristics are present) were mapped and analyzed to ensure access to playgrounds, informal playfields, rectangular fields, and basketball courts within about a ½-mile radius. The analysis found that needs are addressed for playgrounds but that gaps for informal playfields exist in subzones G, L, and M. Access to rectangular fields is more difficult to address as those are organized into fewer, larger complexes. It was recommended that consideration be given to locating future complexes near areas with higher concentrations of lower income families and that planning for trail access be considered. Additional access to basketball courts is needed, with particular focuses needed in subzones C, G, H, I and L.

FIGURE 3-18: POTENTIAL AREAS OF NEED





Chapter 4:

Vision

Greatness does not just happen; it is the result of a concerted effort implementing a shared vision for the future. In the park and recreation system, the shared vision is formed through the combination of the System Plan Guiding Principles and the City of Rochester Parks & Recreation Department's adopted Mission and Strategic Direction Plan. Together, this vision and mission statement provide a guide for the development of the park and recreation system over the next 20 years.

Mission Statement

The City of Rochester Parks & Recreation Department operates with an established, clear purpose, which is identified and communicated by this mission statement:

“Providing traditional, innovative and affordable quality services (activities, programs and facilities) for Rochester’s residents and visitors.”

Strategic Direction Plan

Vision

In 2015 the City of Rochester Parks & Recreation Department underwent a strategic visioning process to identify a plan for the operation of the department over the next three years. This plan includes the following vision:

We will be an organization that has (is):

- » **The Destination of Choice.** We will be top of mind for state, regional and national recreational and competitive events. We are a significant force in the economic development of Rochester through the services and venues we offer.
- » **A Culture of Pride.** We are an organization that does not compromise on excellence. Our employees take pride in all that they do, are engaged and look forward to coming to work every day. We are seen as an employer of choice in the city.
- » **Fully Leveraged Technology.** We fully embrace and leverage technology to work smarter and more efficiently while enhancing the experience of our customers.
- » **Outstanding Reputation in the Community.** We meet the needs of ALL of a diverse community. We top all of the healthy living lists and are looked at as an example of excellence in Parks and Recreation nationally. We are the best practice.
- » **Sustainable Stability.** We are seen as an essential department in this community. We are fully staffed and funded to support the vision and mission of our department.

To support this vision, the Strategic Direction Plan establishes a series of strategic objectives, or areas of focus, around which specific outcomes to implement the vision were identified. A set of actions and projects were then identified and used for the development of annual staffing, training, and budgeting needs. The Strategic Direction Plan will be revisited and updated as needed when the Park and Recreation System Plan is adopted.

System Plan Guiding Principles

In concert with the existing mission and vision of the department, this system plan contains the following set of Guiding Principles: Support Excellence, Cultivate Health, Create Connections, Encourage Exploration, Be Flexible & Responsible, and Grow Gracefully. These principles are intended to direct the development of the park and recreation system. Key characteristics of the Guiding Principles include:

- » Oriented to the future
- » Identify what the community desires for itself based on shared understandings
- » Serve as a tool for evaluation of proposals, projects, ideas, and future directions
- » Provide an anchor during conflict, a way of finding common ground and shared values
- » Become a basis for coordination and cooperation

The Guiding Principles were developed based on community input, the existing conditions analysis, and the needs assessment. The Guiding Principles are organized into a set of six themes. Each theme has a brief description followed by a series of bullets to provide further description.

Support Excellence



As a regional center of commerce, a global destination for health services, and a top-ranking place to call home, Rochester accommodates an ever-changing group of people with an immense range of recreational needs and expectations. Only a top-notch park and recreation system can truly support these many facets of Rochester

and reflect the nature of the happenings within the city. To support excellence the Parks and Recreation department will:

- » Maintain system quality, condition, and safety
- » Address facility needs by exploring state-of-the-art improvements
- » Strengthen partnerships with neighborhoods, associations, agencies, schools, and the arts community
- » Be the region's premier destination for tournaments and events
- » Develop a system that is integral to the region's economic success

Cultivate Health



Parks have long been a symbol and source of rejuvenation and health, but our understanding of their benefits has come a long way from Frederick Law Olmsted's concept of parks as "Lungs of the City". Today, few can argue the need for parks and recreation to cultivate a culture of well-being and active living within a community. Rochester especially, because of its role as host and home to the Mayo Clinic and its visitors, must embrace and meet this need with vigor. In recognition of this, the Parks and Recreation Department will:

- » Provide a diversity of quality facilities to support life-long activity
- » Support healthy living by providing a pedestrian/bicycling network
- » Offer programming and education to support healthy choices
- » Protect environmental health through sustainability initiatives

Create Connections



Despite our increasing virtual connectedness and mobility, or perhaps because of it, physical connections to people and place have become paramount. People are looking to drive less, get more out of their limited resources, such as free time and money, and live in places that support these goals. That means a community that is well-connected physically and socially. To create connections, the Parks and Recreation Department will work to:

- » Develop a connected park, natural area, and trail system
- » Expand opportunities for gathering (shelters, events programming, etc.)
- » Improve accessibility by reducing physical and financial barriers
- » Strengthen the links to neighborhoods and diverse communities
- » Promote community pride

Encourage Exploration



Sometimes we all need a little nudge to expand our horizons. Whether we are a novice pickleball player looking to incorporate physical and social activity into our daily lives, a child from Mogadishu not accustomed to hiking in the woods, or a visitor from Wisconsin who has just stepped out of a hospital room and is looking for an afternoon walk, trying something new can have its own set of challenges. But as we all know, the rewards can be lasting and life-changing. A strong parks and recreation system recognizes this, and takes steps to minimize the barriers that can prevent people from reaping the benefits of the system. To encourage exploration, the Parks and Recreation Department will:

- » Make the system simple to navigate

- » Inspire beginners of all ages to discover new recreational activities, arts and culture
- » Expand opportunities to access nature
- » Attract visitors through unique facilities and easy access

Be Flexible & Responsive



While many communities are subject to the ebbs and flows of population shifts, changing trends, and demographics, changes in Rochester can be magnified because of the nature of its main economy and labor force. As a result, the Parks and Recreation Department must be particularly adept at gauging and responding to the community's evolving character and needs. To be flexible and responsive, the Parks and Recreation Department will work to:

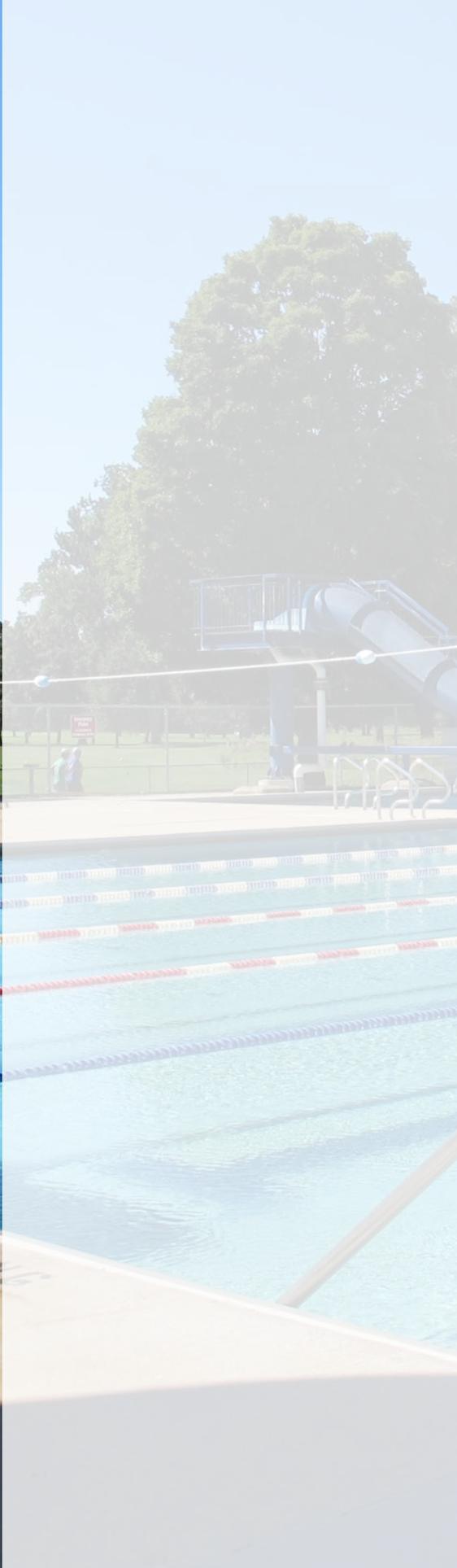
- » Support users of all ages and abilities
- » Adapt to busy lifestyles and recreational trends
- » Collaborate with users on park/facility development
- » Capitalize on technology to improve user experience and operations

Grow Gracefully



Rochester is growing, and while this growth comes with great potential and opportunity, it also comes with responsibility. In collaboration with planners, designers, developers, citizens, and other City departments, Parks and Recreation has an obligation to seek the right mix of development, preservation, spending, and saving. Proper planning and fore-thought will yield great results for parks and recreation, and will save time, money, and other perhaps irrevocable resources down the road. To grow gracefully, the Parks and Recreation Department will:

- » Ensure adequate distribution of parks, facilities, and open spaces
- » Pursue financial stability, now and in the future
- » Staff appropriately to maintain a high quality system
- » Engage volunteers to expand capabilities



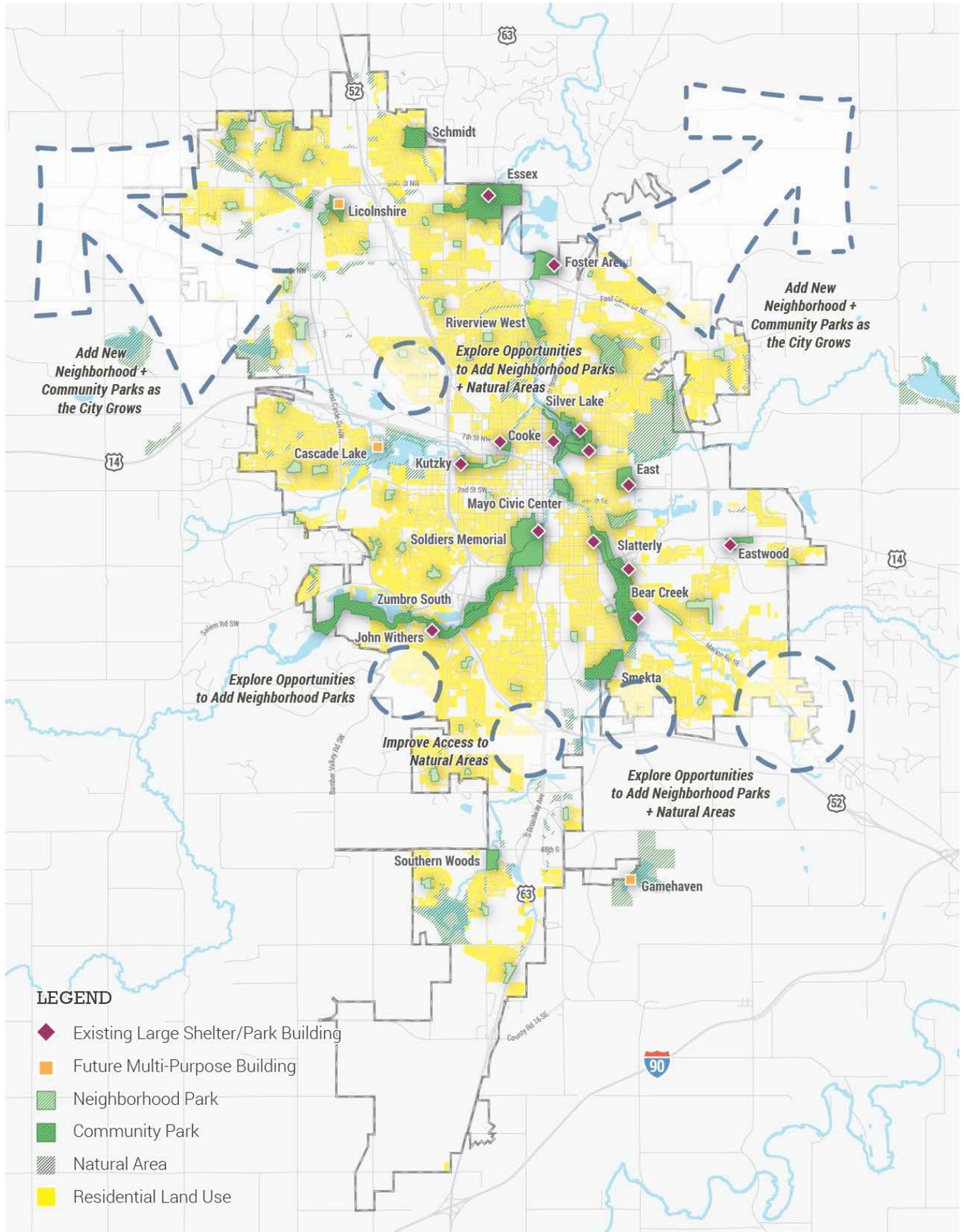
Chapter 5:

The System Plan

Rochester's Park and Recreation System is intended to serve a broad range of recreation, natural resource, transportation, educational, and community-building needs. This chapter outlines a set of recommendations to achieve the vision expressed in Chapter 4. These recommendations have been organized into the nine categories of parks, facilities, trails, natural areas, programming, sustainability, public health, public art, and management and operations. Recommendations were organized using the following format:

- » **Goals** are broad statements that describe a desired outcome or end-state. Goals are often long-term in scope. These are identified as 1, 2, 3, etc.
- » **Policies** describe the general course of action or way in which programs and activities are conducted to achieve a stated goal. Policies speak to underlying values, context, or principles, and are often place-specific. There may be a range of specific actions or strategies that support the implementation of a given policy. These are identified as 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.
- » **Strategies** include programs, actions, or practices that support one or more policy statements. Strategies address at a high level, the “who, what, when, where, and how” of achieving an objective. These are identified as 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, etc. Strategies may include:
 - **Strategic directions:** Policy/regulatory change, ongoing practice, cooperation with/support of outside groups/efforts, studies/planning for non-capital projects (economic development, housing, small area plans, etc.)
 - **Programmatic investments:** Programs, initiatives, events, training, resources (toolkits, handbooks, maps, etc.)
 - **Capital investments:** Studies/planning for capital projects (infrastructure, parks, public facilities), implementation of existing plans/priority projects, operations and maintenance, discrete projects/investments
 - **Funding:** Funding streams and strategies

FIGURE 5-1: PARK AND NATURAL AREA ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS



Parks

When people think of a parks and recreation system, they tend to think about the physical places like their local neighborhood park or community parks like Silver Lake and Soldiers Field. Rochester has a robust park and recreation system with 120 parks and more than 4,200 acres of city-owned parks, preserves and open space. The system is comprised of nine different classes of park that together form a fully functional park and recreation system. The park recommendations focus on providing guidance for each type of park to ensure that each park continues to fulfill its role in the overall system.

1. Ensure Residents Have Convenient Access to Neighborhood Parks for Informal Recreation And Gatherings.

- 1.1. Ensure neighborhood parks are located within ½- to ¾-mile (10 - 15 minute walk) of all residents and are physically integrated into the neighborhoods they serve and that the City maintains a ratio of about 10 acres of neighborhood parkland per 1,000 people.
 - 1.1.1. Work to fill gaps identified within the existing system and add parks as needed as the community grows. Focus on capitalizing on opportunities as development and redevelopment occurs. Use mini parks to provide facilities and open space to meet local needs when neighborhood parks are not possible.
 - 1.1.2. Encourage parks to be defining features of the neighborhood by:
 1. Ensuring a central, connected location rather than an outlot or leftover land.
 2. Providing adequate access by locating neighborhood parks with at least one side fronting a public street.
 3. Improving resident connectivity by adding trails and sidewalks that link with the greater trail network.
- 1.2. Accommodate the needs of the residential populations served by neighborhood parks.
 - 1.2.1. Create and implement a process for gathering neighborhood input on park design when updating existing or planning new neighborhood parks.
 - 1.2.2. Ensure every neighborhood park has at least one opportunity for informal play through an open turf area, natural play area, or playground.
 - 1.2.3. Use the Activity Delivery Guidelines to determine appropriate recreational uses within neighborhood parks.
 - 1.2.4. Design neighborhood parks to have unique features or improvements to avoid a system of 'cookie cutter' parks.



Examples of unique features (i.e. public art, natural resource preservation & interpretation)



Examples of picnic shelters & small, multi-purpose buildings

- 1.2.5. Collaborate with local neighborhood residents and organizations to incorporate public art or develop elements that establish a unique neighborhood park identity and sense of place.
- 1.2.6. Support volunteer efforts for neighborhood gatherings at parks.
- 1.2.7. Encourage neighborhood groups to take an active role in managing park maintenance and enhancement, using groups like Eastside Pioneers Neighborhood Association and Friends of Indian Heights as models.
- 1.2.8. Strive for neighborhood parks that are universally accessible, incorporating necessary infrastructure such as accessible play equipment, picnic tables, and curb ramps.
- 1.2.9. Provide basic amenities like picnic tables, seating, shade trees, bike racks, and trash receptacles at every neighborhood park.
- 1.2.10. Provide portable restrooms at neighborhood parks as park use and demand warrants.
- 1.2.11. Add posting boards in neighborhood parks to encourage communication and informal meetings in parks.

2. Provide a System of Connected, Community Parks That Each Offer a Distinctive Mix of Recreational Activities and Natural Amenities.

- 2.1. Ensure community parks are located within two miles of every resident by adding Community Parks as the community grows and/or opportunities arise. The City should maintain a ratio of about 24 to 30 acres of parks dedicated for a mixture of community, athletic, and regional purposes for every 1,000 people.
- 2.2. Ensure the mix of facilities across Community Parks is equitably distributed and provides for year-round use.
 - 2.2.1. Ensure at least 2-3 recreational activities are accommodated within each Community Park; see the Activity Delivery Guidelines for appropriate activities.
 - 2.2.2. Locate in every Community Park a large picnic shelter or small multi-purpose building that can be used for indoor neighborhood events, programming, and as a warming house in the winter. The type of structure should be determined by the other uses and activities located within each particular Community Park.
 - 2.2.3. At a minimum, each Community Park should include the following universally accessible facilities: picnic tables, shade trees, playground, trail loop, a naturalized amenity

or feature, a picnic shelter or park building, all-season restrooms, and parking.

- 2.2.4. Make sure there is at least one type of winter recreational opportunity in each Community Park.
- 2.2.5. Conduct park planning processes with community input for any significant planned improvement or at least every 20 years after original construction.

3. Provide Regional Parks that are Destinations for Citizens of Rochester and Beyond.

- 3.1. Build upon the existing regional park assets.
 - 3.1.1. Maintain and implement existing master plans for each regional park.
 - 3.1.2. Apply for funding through the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) and other available funding sources to support new features, trails, and major maintenance needs such as invasive species control.
 - 3.1.3. As the community grows, evaluate the need for and opportunities to add one or two additional regional parks either independently or in collaboration with other agencies like Olmsted County.
- 3.2. Enhance the visibility of and access to regional parks.
 - 3.2.1. Increase trail connections to surrounding residents and the broader trail system.
 - 3.2.2. Identify additional partnerships for added programming within regional parks.
 - 3.2.3. Ensure universal accessibility to regional parks and their facilities.



Cascade Lake Park (top) and Gamehaven Park (bottom) both have received regional designation, and have their own park master plans



This plan recommends investments in regional athletic complexes to provide tournament-level facilities



Park Development

Traditionally, small towns and cities have been organized around a town green, parks, and open spaces. These green spaces and activity areas give life, energy and character to their surrounding communities. In many ways, they define the places where we live. Therefore, the development of parks and open spaces should be carefully considered and not be relegated to leftover spaces in our communities. Rather, they should play a central role in the organization of our neighborhoods, communities and cities. The criteria for park development should consider the following:

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are the basic unit of the park system. They serve the recreational and social focus of the adjoining neighborhoods and contribute to a distinct neighborhood identity. Neighborhood parks should serve as extensions of the neighborhood around them, providing recreational and social activities.

Development Design Criteria:

- » *Neighborhood parks should generally be located on a local or major local street.*
- » *If located near an arterial street, provide a barrier with landscaping, fencing or walls.*
- » *Provide adequate connections by linking parks to adjacent developments with trails and sidewalks.*
- » *They should be designed for both active and passive uses and geared toward the specific needs of the neighborhood, all age groups, and all physical abilities.*
- » *Park design should create a "sense of place" that reflects and enhances neighborhood identity. Use public art, preservation of natural areas, and other park design to distinguish parks from one another.*
- » *Incorporate natural features on the site, such as topography, vegetation and hydrology.*
- » *Maximize number of residences fronting the park.*
- » *Include widened on-street parking area adjacent to the park.*
- » *Traffic calming devices should be encouraged next to parks.*

Community Parks

Community parks are designed to be accessible by multiple neighborhoods and should focus on meeting community-based recreational needs and on preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. Community parks are generally larger in scale than neighborhood parks, but smaller than regional parks and are designed for residents who live within a 3-mile radius. While community parks may also meet the needs of neighborhoods, they primarily function as “destination” parks with special facilities such as lighted sports fields, amphitheaters, etc. that serve the entire community.

Development Design Criteria:

- » *Community Parks should be located on a collector or higher order roadway.*
- » *If located near an arterial street, provide a barrier with landscaping, fencing or walls.*
- » *Preference is for streets on all sides of the park or on three sides with a school, municipal feature or significant natural feature on the fourth side.*
- » *Encourage trail connections to other parks.*
- » *65% of park space should be dedicated to active uses and 35% to passive uses.*
- » *Parking should be provided sufficient to support park amenities, but should occupy no more than 10% of the site.*
- » *Design should include widened on-street parking area adjacent to the park.*
- » *Traffic calming devices should be encouraged next to parks.*





Before development occurs planning efforts should identify natural resource corridors that can be preserved for conservation, stormwater management, recreation, and trail purposes.

4. Provide a High Quality System of Athletic Complexes That Meet the Needs of Rochester, Now and in The Future.

- 4.1. Provide complexes designed to meet local and regional tournament needs for rectangular and diamond field sports by providing high quality field surfaces and support facilities such as electronic scoreboards, lighting, shelter with concessions and restrooms, and adequate parking.
- 4.2. Provide complexes designed to meet local play and practice needs for soccer, baseball, softball, football, and lacrosse.
 - 4.2.1. Improve efficiency and quality where appropriate by consolidating single fields into local complexes as the single fields reach their end of life.
 - 4.2.2. Distribute local complexes by park zone to provide convenient access.

5. Maintain Environmental Parks as Areas Set Aside for Preserving Natural Resources and Connecting People to Nature.

- 5.1. Limit development in Environmental Parks to improvements that support passive uses or address water quality & habitat.
- 5.2. Provide opportunities for users to connect with nature.
 - 5.2.1. Use low impact design to add trails, balancing the types of trails available (paved, soft surface, mowed, etc.) with natural resource quality, topography, existing availability, and needed connections to neighborhoods.
 - 5.2.2. Improve access for people of all ability by ensuring one ADA accessible trail in each park zone.
 - 5.2.3. Facilitate access by connecting residents via trails, bikeways, and sidewalks.

- 5.3. Seize opportunities to create additional Environmental Parks as the City grows or areas of natural value become available.
- 5.4. Develop and use management plans to guide preservation, restoration, and management of Environmental Parks.

6. Maximize the Functionality of Linear Parks.

- 6.1. Utilize linear parks to provide ecosystem services, including habitat, stormwater management for the park system, removal of particulate matter from the air, cooling, etc.
 - 6.1.1. Green linear parks by planting more trees and naturalizing where possible.
 - 6.1.2. Reduce development impacts by maintaining a buffer of 50 feet around water resources.
- 6.2. Use linear parks to make trail and natural connections in the park system.
 - 6.2.1. Establish linear parks as the community grows to establish greenway corridors.
 - 6.2.2. Design future linear parks to include trail connections.
 - 6.2.3. Coordinate development and management of linear green spaces with other City and County agencies to effectively provide connectivity and environmentally sustainable resources for the community.



Provide opportunities for users to connect with nature while balancing natural resource management

7. Provide Special Use Facilities to Address Specific Needs.

- 7.1. Re-evaluate special use parks annually to ensure their viability.
 - 7.1.1. Measure use and cost recovery.
 - 7.1.2. Identify and address maintenance needs.
- 7.2. Maintain and expand partnerships where possible for the programming, operations, and maintenance of special use facilities.
- 7.3. Where possible, distribute special use parks by zone when building new or relocating existing facilities.
- 7.4. Invest in Mayo Field in its current location to maintain an expected level of quality throughout the life of the facility.



Investments in Mayo Field are recommended

Facilities

Rochester's park and recreation system offers a range of recreational facilities to meet the varied needs of its users. Facility recommendations were organized by the type of use in recognition that the frequency and type of facility differs depending on whether the use will be informal, practice, local leagues, regional tournaments, or specialized users.

1. Maintain Quality Facilities for Informal and Practice Use Distributed Across the City.

- 1.1. Ensure each park zone has athletic fields and courts distributed throughout to serve local needs.
 - 1.1.1. Provide high-quality tennis courts by transitioning neighborhood tennis courts to groups of 2-4 courts with a backstop, and provide at least one set per park zone.
 - 1.1.2. Provide convenient access to pickleball by striping at least one tennis court for pickleball in each park zone.
 - 1.1.3. Provide at least one location for cricket in the community at West River Park.
 - 1.1.4. Continue to provide fields for lacrosse at Faud Monsour Complex or alternate locations as opportunities arise.
 - 1.1.5. Transition full size basketball courts from neighborhood parks to community parks, locating one or two within each park zone.
 - 1.1.6. Provide at least one half-court for basketball in each park subzone.
 - 1.1.7. Provide at least one sand volleyball court located adjacent to a picnic pavilion in each park zone.
 - 1.1.8. Ensure within each park subzone that half of the neighborhood parks have open turf areas.
- 1.2. Increase access to nature-based play throughout the City by providing at least one nature play area within each subzone, or nature play components in a playground if the subzone cannot support its own full nature play area.
- 1.3. Expand outreach to all user groups or potential user groups to better serve their recreational needs.
 - 1.3.1. Engage minority/immigrant groups on a semi-annual basis to assess needs and maintain open communication.
 - 1.3.2. Solicit input from known users on future needs.



Expand nature-based playgrounds



Transition to half-court basketball

FIGURE 5-2: INFORMAL RECREATION FACILITY DISTRIBUTION (BASKETBALL, TENNIS, & PICKLEBALL)

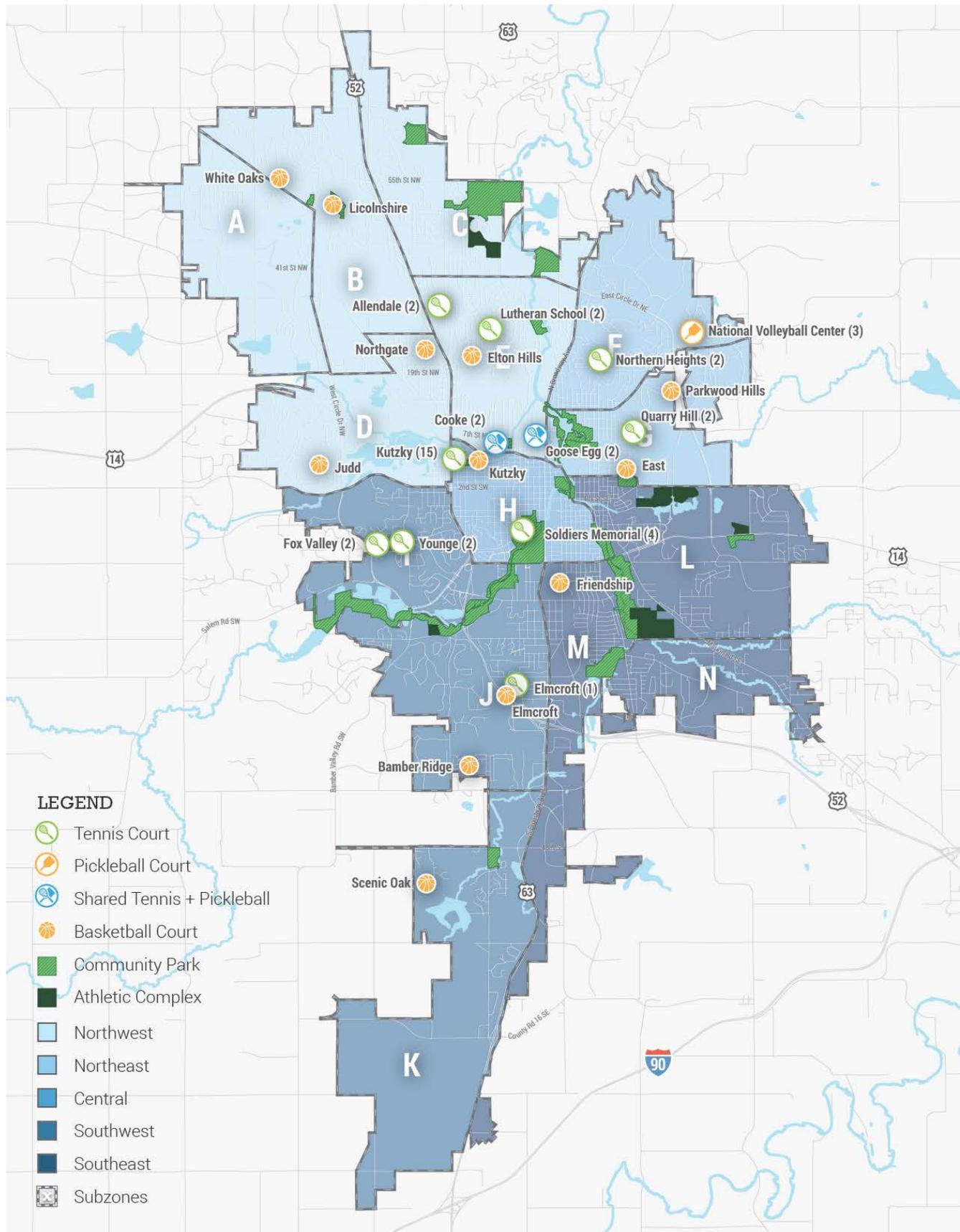
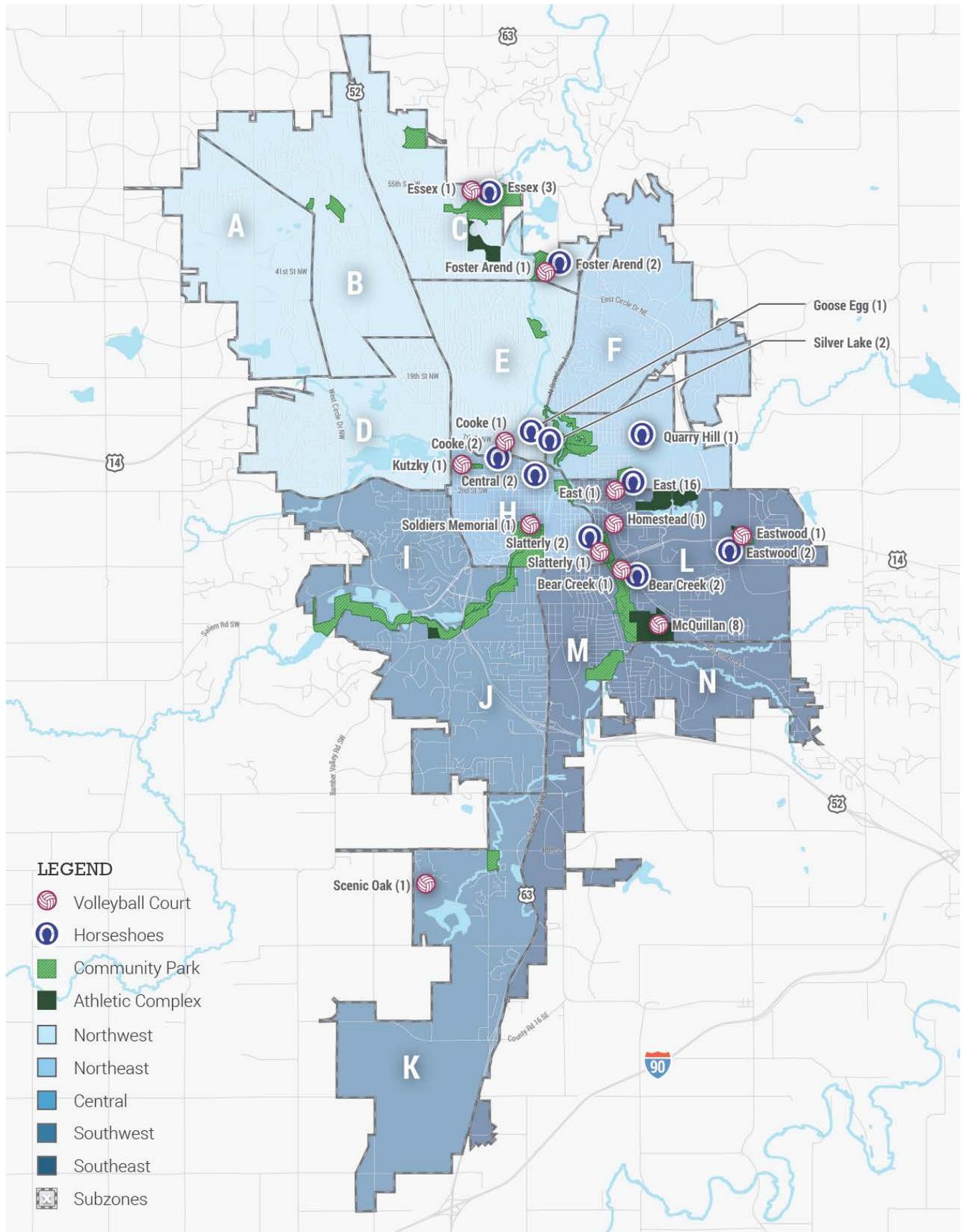


FIGURE 5-3: INFORMAL RECREATION FACILITY DISTRIBUTION (VOLLEYBALL & HORSESHOES)



- 1.3.3. Develop communication tools to facilitate understanding of what facilities may best serve their needs and how to reserve facilities if needed.
- 1.4. Partner with schools to provide access to athletic fields/facilities, particularly to serve recreational users.

2. Provide Facilities to Serve Local Tournaments and Leagues.

- 2.1. Consolidate and distribute athletic fields to increase convenience and the efficiency of operations and maintenance.
 - 2.1.1. Improve some existing fields for more efficient use. Improvements may include reorientation to reduce conflicts, safety fencing and netting, lighted fields to increase use, irrigation and turf enhancements, and additional parking.
 - 2.1.2. Consolidate baseball fields with two to three fields per location. Convert low-use or poor condition fields to other uses as replacement fields are available. Distribute across the city with at least one set per park zone.
 - 2.1.3. Consolidate soccer into fewer parks, maintaining at least two parks with six fields and the remaining parks with two to three fields each. Distribute across the city, ensuring at least one set per zone (except the Central Zone).
 - 2.1.4. Maintain the existing multi-use, flexible rectangle fields at Soldiers, Kutzky East, and Silver Lake Parks.
 - 2.1.5. Develop two new complex sites with six fields each to serve football, lacrosse, and rugby.
 - 2.1.6. Add permanent rugby goal posts to one or two fields.
 - 2.1.7. Plan for the replacement of the Faud Monsour sports fields onto city-owned property.
- 2.2. Contribute to the facility needs of the local tennis community by maintaining a set of at least 7 courts at one community park.
- 2.3. Contribute to the facility needs of the local aquatics community by maintaining the indoor aquatics facilities at the Recreation Center and providing one outdoor lap pool.
- 2.4. Provide a dedicated pickleball facility at a community park.



Plan to acquire Faud Monsour sports fields as City-owned property



Provide dedicated pickleball courts to address the sport's growing popularity

3. Provide Regional Tournament Quality Facilities to Serve Associations and Boost the Local Economy.

- 3.1. Ensure athletic complexes and indoor facilities include a minimum level of amenities to serve tournaments, including scoreboards, concessions, restrooms, parking, etc.
- 3.2. Maintain partnerships with associations and schools to meet tournament needs.
 - 3.2.1. Collaborate with associations on design, operations, and maintenance.
 - 3.2.2. Support collaboration with the school district to meet tournament needs.
- 3.3. Provide athletic complexes and indoor facilities that attract regional tournaments while serving local needs.
 - 3.3.1. Improve Watson Sports Complex for baseball tournaments and local play. Explore the conversion of some existing rectangle fields to baseball while still maintaining neighborhood access to some rectangle fields. Include amenities and three 75-foot fields and one 90-foot field.
 - 3.3.2. Maintain McQuillan and RYFSA Fields as a softball complex.
 - 3.3.3. Establish a rectangle field complex with 10 to 12 fields and amenities.
 - 3.3.4. Maintain and improve Graham Arena for tournament use.
 - 3.3.5. Maintain the National Volleyball Center and Recreation Center for tournament use.

FIGURE 5-4: LOCAL TOURNAMENT FACILITY DISTRIBUTION

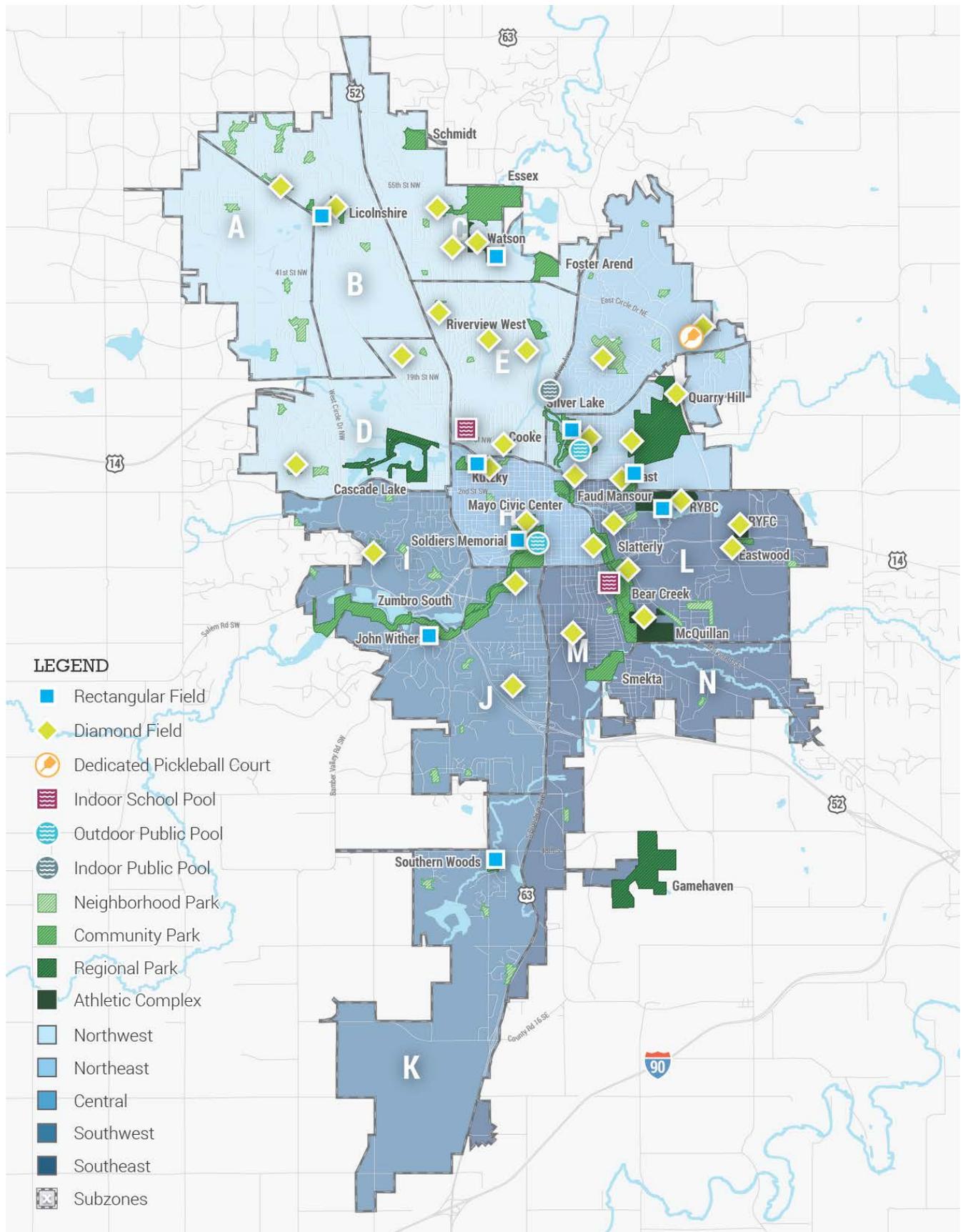
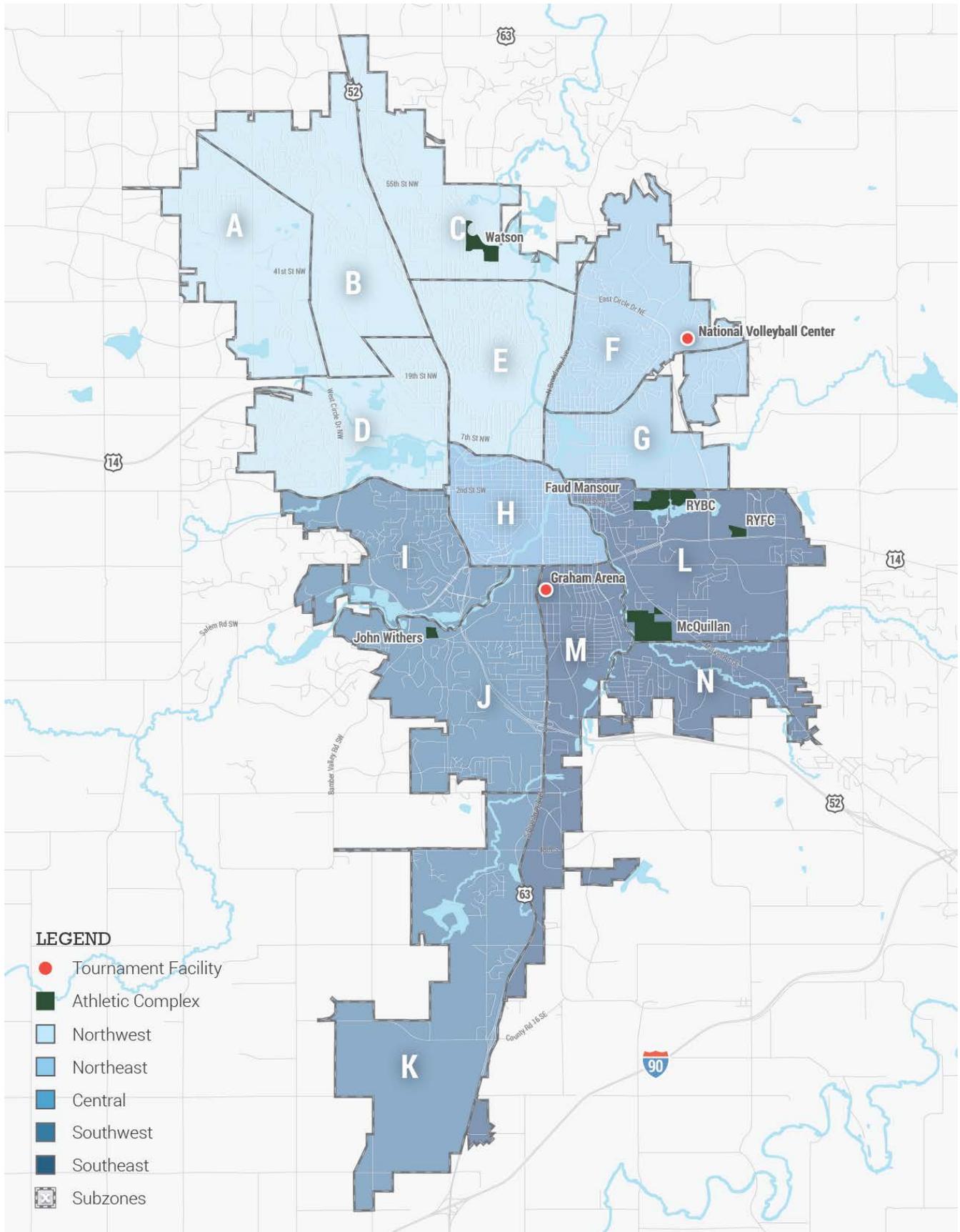


FIGURE 5-5: REGIONAL TOURNAMENT FACILITY DISTRIBUTION



4. Provide a Diversity of Specialized Recreational Facilities Distributed Across the City.

- 4.1. Support year-round recreation by improving access to outdoor winter facilities.
 - 4.1.1. Ensure each park zone has at least one outdoor hockey/pleasure skating rink.
 - 4.1.2. Designate two to three locations throughout the community for sledding.
 - 4.1.3. Provide skating opportunities on Cascade Lake, Foster Arend, and other frozen waterways as appropriate.
 - 4.1.4. Provide access to groomed cross country ski trails at Essex Park, Quarry Hill Park and Nature Center, Gamehaven Park, Parkwood Hills Park, Eastwood Golf Course, and Soldier's Field Golf Course.
 - 4.1.5. Work with partners to provide snow-making efforts at Gamehaven Regional Park for cross country skiing.
 - 4.1.6. Promote Northern Hills Golf Course and Hadley Creek Golf Course as open for snowshoeing and cross country skiing.
 - 4.1.7. Take advantage of larger natural areas to allow for un-programmed skiing, snowshoeing and hiking activities.
- 4.2. Improve access to aquatics.
 - 4.2.1. Maintain the Indoor Recreation Center to provide year-round swimming opportunities.
 - 4.2.2. Maintain and improve beach facilities at Foster Arend and Cascade Lake.
 - 4.2.3. Replace existing Soldiers Field pool with lap pool, children's activity area, and pool activities like climbing wall, basketball hoop, etc.
 - 4.2.4. Add small scale interactive water features (splash pads, plaza with water) to provide free access to water play. These facilities should be located within community parks with one location per zone where no other low-cost, outdoor aquatic features exist.
 - 4.2.5. Replace the existing splash pad at Nachriener Park.
 - 4.2.6. Consider the development of interactive water features (e.g. fountains, splash pads, etc.) as part of regional and community parks.



Provide small-scale aquatic amenities (like splash pads) as well as a lap pool with pool activities (like a climbing wall)

FIGURE 5-6: OUTDOOR WINTER RECREATION FACILITY DISTRIBUTION

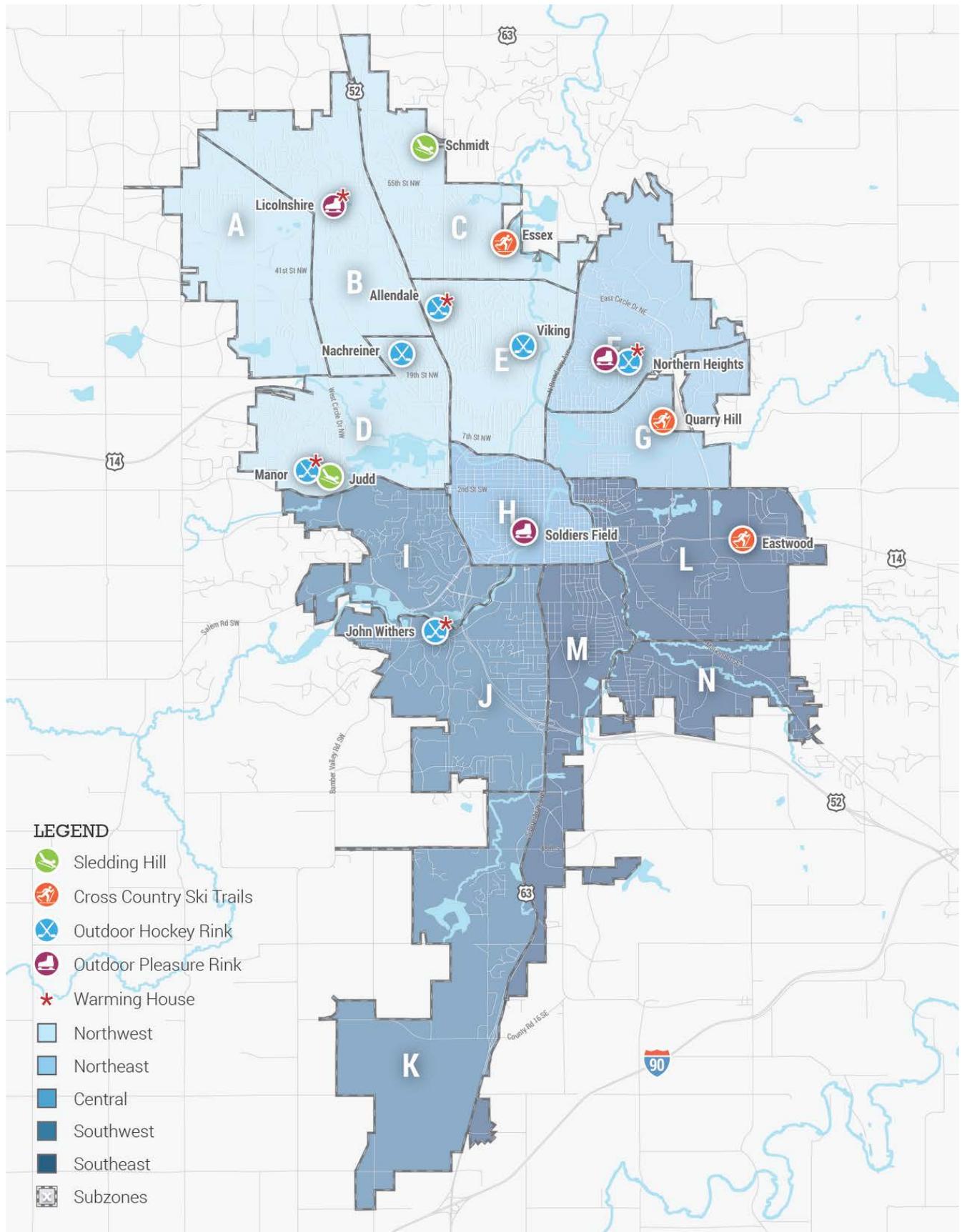
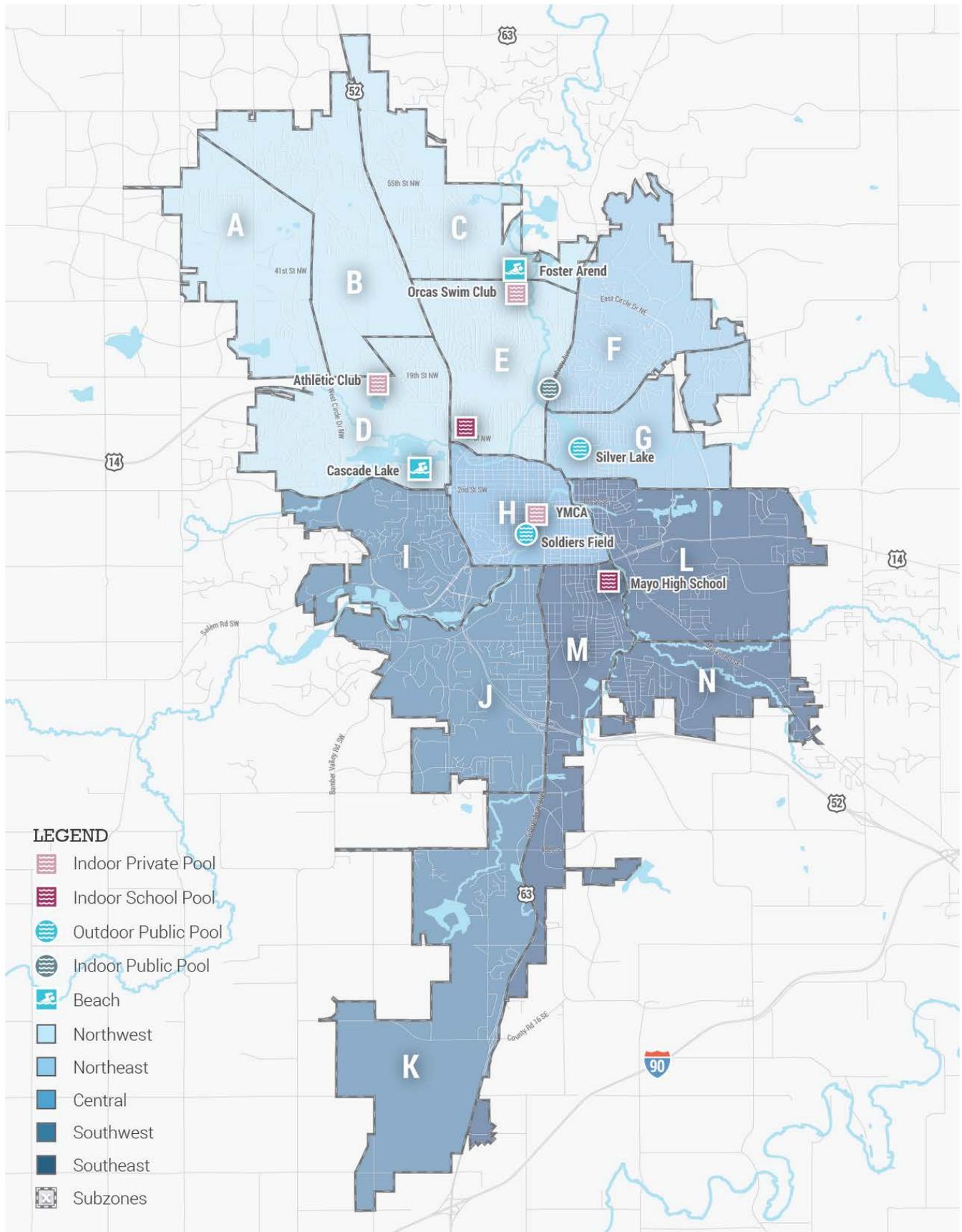


FIGURE 5-7: AQUATIC FACILITY DISTRIBUTION



4.3.



Maintain and enhance the skate park at Silver Lake Park

- 4.4. Manage the golf courses to meet demand and marketplace trends.
 - 4.4.1. Evaluate and prioritize maintenance, upgrades and replacement investments balancing usage and costs.
 - 4.4.2. Develop future golfers by providing the Hadley Creek Learning Center, offering lessons, and supporting The First Tee Organization.
 - 4.4.3. Establish and maintain communication with the golfing community to solicit feedback and discuss operational issues.
 - 4.4.4. Annually review user fees to ensure they reflect demand, costs, and changes in the marketplace.
 - 4.4.5. Maintain and routinely evaluate public/private partnerships to provide food and beverage service at Eastwood, Northern Hills, and Soldiers Field.
 - 4.4.6. Conduct facility assessments to evaluate and prioritize the long-term investments needed for each clubhouse.
 - 4.4.7. Periodically review alternative and compatible uses at the golf course facilities to continue to meet the community's needs.
- 4.5. Expand and improve the existing skate park at Silver Lake Park.
- 4.6. Provide four disc golf courses distributed throughout the city.
 - 4.6.1. Maintain existing disc golf courses at East Park and Slattery Park.
 - 4.6.2. Develop disc golf course at Gamehaven as proposed in the Master Plan.
 - 4.6.3. Add another disc golf course in the Northwest Park Zone at an appropriate location based on the Activity Delivery Guidelines.
- 4.7. Provide four dog parks distributed throughout the city.
 - 4.7.1. Maintain the existing dog park in the south.
 - 4.7.2. Develop a dog park in the Essex Park area.
 - 4.7.3. Develop the dog park behind the Recreation Center.
 - 4.7.4. Add a dog park in the Northwest Park Zone at an appropriate location based on the Activity Delivery Guidelines.
- 4.8. Provide mountain biking at three locations distributed throughout the city.
 - 4.8.1. Develop a course at Gamehaven Park as proposed in the Master Plan.

- 4.8.2. Evaluate the long term viability of the mountain biking course at Eastwood and explore as needed alternative locations.
- 4.8.3. Add a new course in the Northwest Park Zone at an appropriate location based on the Activity Delivery Guidelines or in conjunction with Olmsted County.
- 4.9. Maintain and expand two archery facilities distributed at either end of the city.
- 4.10. Maintain existing river access for canoeing, kayaking, and rowing, and expand the river access in conjunction with County initiatives and the Destination Medical Center (DMC) Development Plan.
- 4.11. Provide one set of two horseshoe courts in each park zone.
 - 4.11.1. Maintain existing facilities for the remainder of their useful life.
 - 4.11.2. Focus new or replacement courts in sets of two adjacent to picnic pavilions.
 - 4.11.3. Explore opportunities to add a set of two courts in the northwest and southwest park zones.
- 4.12. Provide one public community garden in each park zone.
 - 4.12.1. Add public community gardens as demands warrant.
 - 4.12.2. Support partnerships to provide additional gardens.
- 4.13. Pilot facilities for new or trending sports to assess appropriateness for park system, cost, durability, and demand. (e.g. slacklining, gaga ball, human foosball, etc.)



Gaga Ball



Human Foosball



Sliver Lake Fire Station

5. Maintain Quality, Up-to-Date Indoor Facilities to Provide Recreational, Cultural, and Community Gathering Activities.

- 5.1. Maintain and expand existing indoor facilities to address changing recreational needs.
 - 5.1.1. Assess facility needs on an annual basis as part of budgeting and capital improvement planning.
 - 5.1.2. Maintain the Rochester Recreation Center as the hub for indoor recreation and programs, including indoor aquatics, ice rinks, gyms, meeting rooms and senior services.
 - 5.1.3. Maintain the National Volleyball Center as the hub for indoor gym recreation and programming.
 - 5.1.4. Maintain and improve Graham Arena to meet the needs of a variety of users (hockey, figure skating, trade shows, festivals, etc.).
- 5.2. Develop and implement a facility and operations plan for the renovation and long-term use of the former Fire Station #2 for public recreation programs and other users as identified.



Small, multi-purpose buildings for neighborhood-based activities

- 5.3. Maintain the historic integrity and functionality of the Plummer House and grounds for community gathering.
- 5.4. Provide one small, multi-purpose building per zone that can serve a variety of needs including locations for neighborhood-based classes and programming, private rentals, winter warming house, and restrooms.
 - 5.4.1. Develop and implement facility plans to upgrade the Soldiers Field Pool or Club House and Silver Lake Pool buildings for year-round use.
 - 5.4.2. Design the planned structures for Cascade Lake and Gamehaven parks to provide year-round, multi-functional use.
 - 5.4.3. Add a new year-round facility at Lincolnshire Park.
 - 5.4.4. Add buildings as needed for community and regional parks to support the goals of the park system.

6. Continually Strive to Evaluate And Improve Partnerships with Facility User Groups.

- 6.1. Work with clubs, associations, and other groups to regularly assess needs.
 - 6.1.1. Maintain a database of existing organizations and contacts to facilitate communication.
 - 6.1.2. Ensure, at minimum, annual communications with existing organizations.
 - 6.1.3. Implement an annual feedback mechanism, such as a survey, to measure satisfaction with organizations and groups.

Trails

Trails are one of the most desired and economical park amenities. They bring the system closer to every resident, offer transportation alternatives, and support a healthy, active population. Trails are an essential component of an accessible recreation system, particularly for those who cannot or choose not to drive, including low income households, children, and the elderly.

Rochester's 85 miles of trails are managed by Parks and Recreation and Public Works. While the System Plan primarily focuses its recommendations on those trails located on park and recreation system property, it also advocates supporting investment in the trails managed by Public Works and providing amenities in the park and recreation system that can support the use of the trail systems for commuting purposes.

1. Provide a Multi-Purpose Trail System That Encourages Recreation.

- 1.1. Expand the system and eliminate gaps to create an interconnected and comprehensive system of multi-purpose trails.
 - 1.1.1. Establish and market cross-city trails to interconnect the Park Zones.
 - 1.1.2. Collaborate with Olmsted County and surrounding communities on establishing regional trail connections.
 - 1.1.3. Ensure there is at least one major trail loop (greater than 3 miles) in each zone.
 - 1.1.4. Eliminate system gaps giving consideration to the following priorities:
 4. Access to regional parks, community parks, athletic complexes and special use facilities;
 5. Elimination of cross city trail gaps;
 6. Elimination of gaps or interim routes for existing trail loops;
 7. Extension of cross city trails;
 8. Development of new trail loops;
 9. Development of new regional trails.
 - 1.1.5. Ensuring subdivisions have mid-block trails or sidewalks that can link to nearby parks.
 - 1.1.6. Link Reservoirs to the trail system.
 - 1.1.7. Evaluate the potential aesthetic benefits of aligning trail routes along system water resources like stormwater facilities, infiltration basins, etc.



Trails along roadways (above) have a much different aesthetic than trails through natural areas (below)



Construct new trails to fill gaps in the system

FIGURE 5-8: PRIORITIZED TRAIL GAPS

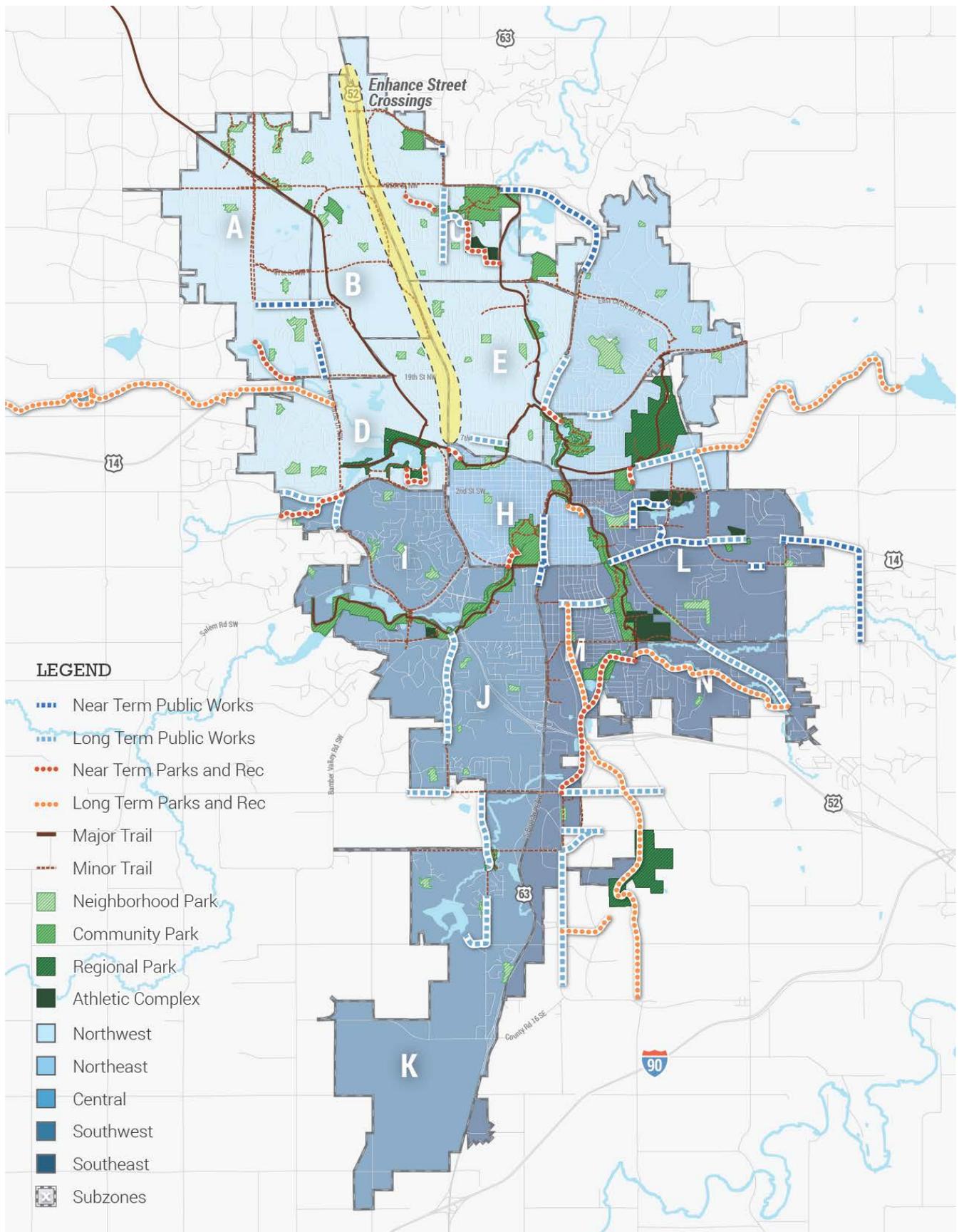


FIGURE 5-9: TRAIL LOOPS

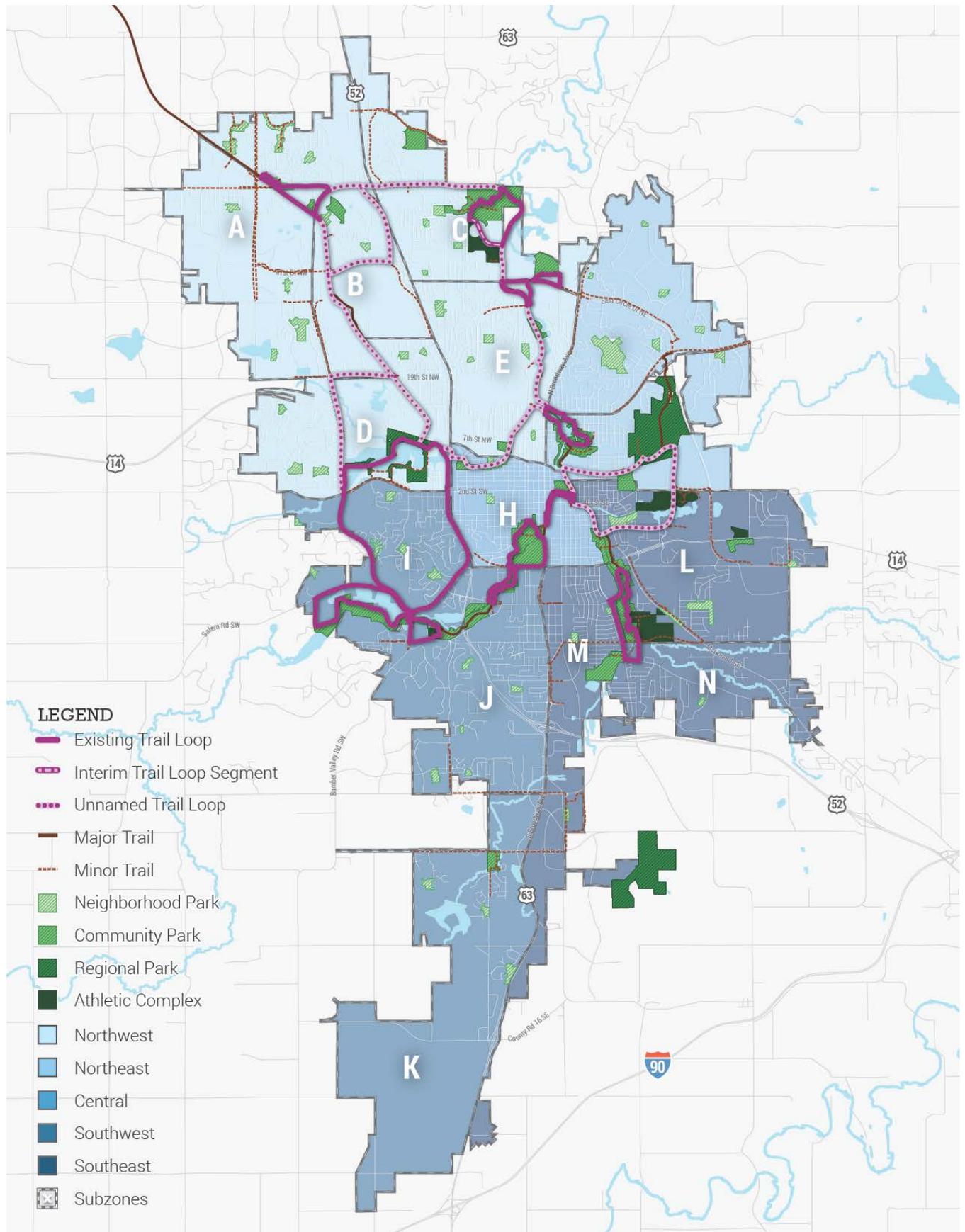
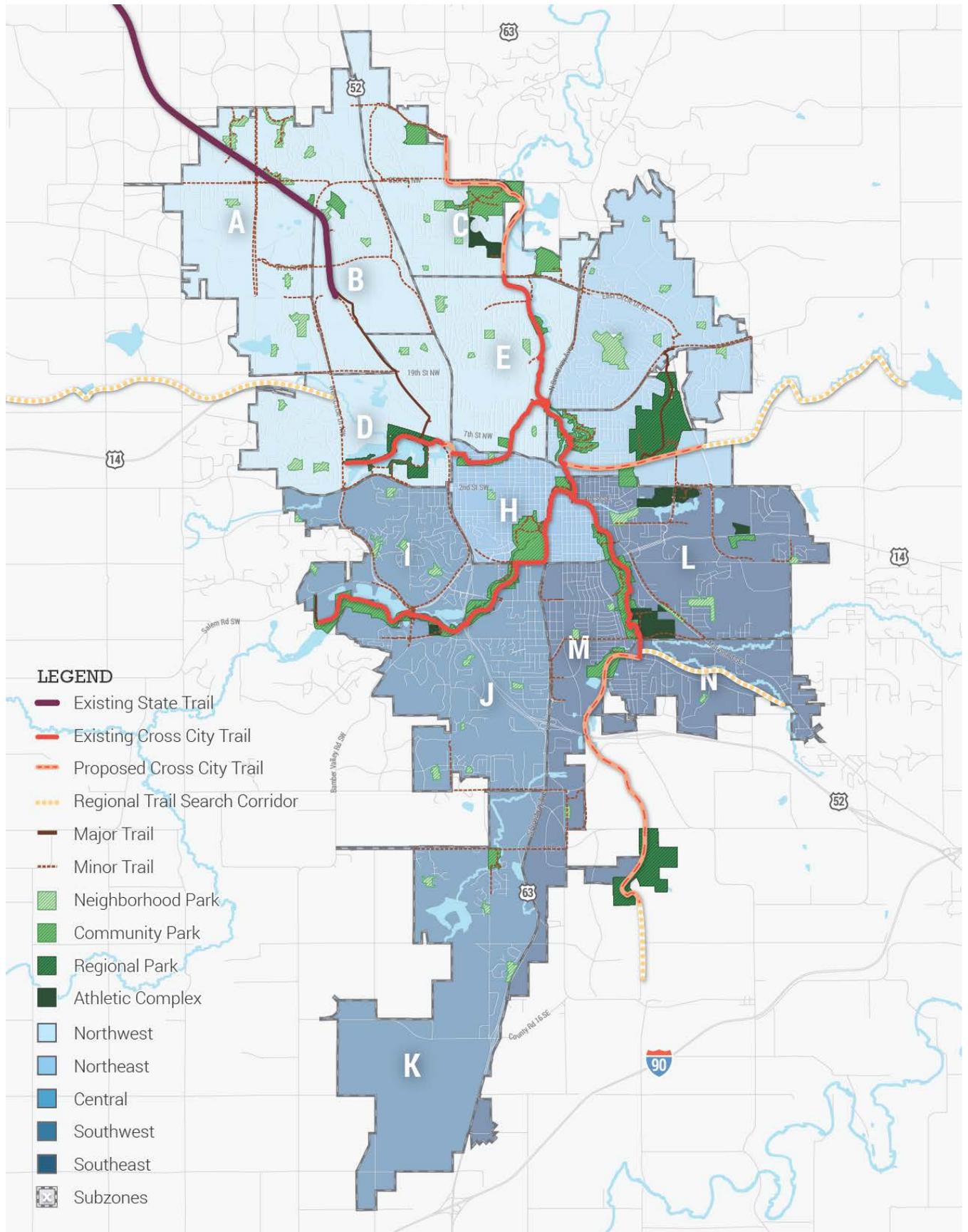


FIGURE 5-10: EXISTING & PROPOSED CROSS CITY & REGIONAL TRAILS



- 1.1.8. Ensure there is at least one ADA accessible trail in each zone within a natural area 10 acres or larger.
- 1.2. Diversify available trails to serve specific recreational purposes.
 - 1.2.1. Develop a system of natural surface trails to provide hiking opportunities by:
 - 10. Creating a GIS inventory of the existing natural surface trails;
 - 11. Developing and providing maps of natural surface trails to the public;
 - 12. Determining the current level of access and distribution;
 - 13. Identifying a goal for access and distribution;
 - 14. Identifying and prioritizing gaps to address.
 - 1.2.2. Look for opportunities to expand mountain biking in new locations.
 - 1.2.3. Expand cross-country skiing opportunities by:
 - 15. Communicating the availability of community parks, regional parks, and golf courses for ungroomed cross-country skiing;
 - 16. Groom additional cross-country ski trails.



Expand natural surface trail system

2. Support Use of Trails for Active Transportation to Daily Destinations.

- 2.1. Facilitate implementation of the Rochester Area Bicycle Master Plan in the park and recreation system.
 - 2.1.1. Recognize the corridor classifications of Regional Bikeway, Major City Bikeway, Local Area Bikeway, and Express Bikeway as set forth in the plan as they pertain to trails under the jurisdiction of Parks and Recreation.
 - 2.1.2. Work with other agencies and departments to aid in the implementation of the goals set forth in the plan.
 - 2.1.3. Sign on-street bike lanes and right-of-way paths/sidewalks when utilized to supplement the trail system, transitioning these to off-road facilities where and when possible.
 - 2.1.4. Support the connection of the bikeways and trail system with public transit, providing flexibility and choice for travel options.
 - 2.1.5. Support efforts to close safe routes to school gaps.
- 2.2. Make biking the easy and safe choice.
 - 2.2.1. Provide bike racks, water fountains, changing facilities, and restrooms at select facilities to support bicycle commuting.



Provide bike racks at high-use facilities

- 2.2.2. Identify changes in highly-utilized destinations and re-evaluate maintenance and winter plowing policies as needed.
- 2.2.3. Install bike racks at all regional parks, community parks, athletic complexes, and special use facilities.

3. Provide a Welcoming and Safe Environment for All Trail Users.

- 3.1. Increase public awareness of the trail system through marketing, signage, print, and electronic navigation tools.
 - 3.1.1. Improve system navigation by implementing the existing wayfinding plan and expanding its reach to areas outside of the Central Zone.
 - 3.1.2. Reinforce the economic and health benefit of trails.
 - 3.1.3. Promote the trail system as an integral part Rochester's quality of life and the community's ability to attract economic development.
- 3.2. Improve the trail user experience.
 - 3.2.1. Ensure public awareness of proper trail use, seasonal trail closures, and trail etiquette.
 - 3.2.2. Implement a vegetation management program to maintain/trim/thin vegetation back from trails to improve safety.
 - 3.2.3. Update the winter trail maintenance policy on an annual basis, re-evaluating and amending it based on factors like historical maintenance, commuting routes, safe routes to school, and requests from residents.
 - 3.2.4. Expand lighting on select routes to increase safety.
 - 3.2.5. Add call boxes along key, highly-traveled routes to enhance the perception of safety for students, visitors, and commuters.
 - 3.2.6. Provide potable water sources along the heavily-used portions of the trail.

4. Integrate Trails into the Planning and Design Process for Development and Public Improvements.

- 4.1. Ensure trails are addressed in the development process.
 - 4.1.1. Proactively acquire and preserve land, right-of-way, or easements for trails identified in this Plan.
 - 4.1.2. During the development design review process, provide clear direction on creating an integrated trail system that provides connections to key locations and the ability for users to complete walking/biking loops.
- 4.2. Make trail planning part of internal processes.
 - 4.2.1. Include bike and trail facilities as appropriate in *all* new and reconstruction street projects and public infrastructure projects.
 - 4.2.2. Evaluate opportunities for the continuation or establishment of trail connections when roads are redesigned, abandoned or closed.
 - 4.2.3. Annually review missing segments and priority segments as part of the City Capital Improvement Plan processes.
 - 4.2.4. Meet with Public Works and other agencies to discuss trails on a semi-annual basis to coordinate/collaborate on upcoming projects.
 - 4.2.5. Initiate planning on priority segments to position projects for grant funding. This could include preparing preliminary plans/layouts, evaluating right-of-way needs, environmental documentation, and review of historic resources.
- 4.3. Take innovative steps towards supporting bicycle infrastructure
 - 4.3.1. Support the installation of bike lockers in key locations around downtown.
 - 4.3.2. Support a cost-share program to encourage existing businesses to install bike racks.
 - 4.3.3. Support a recreational and commuter bike share program
 - 4.3.4. Support the development of an ordinance requiring enhanced or secure bicycle parking and shower facilities for certain types/sizes of new construction.



Install bike lockers for downtown commuters

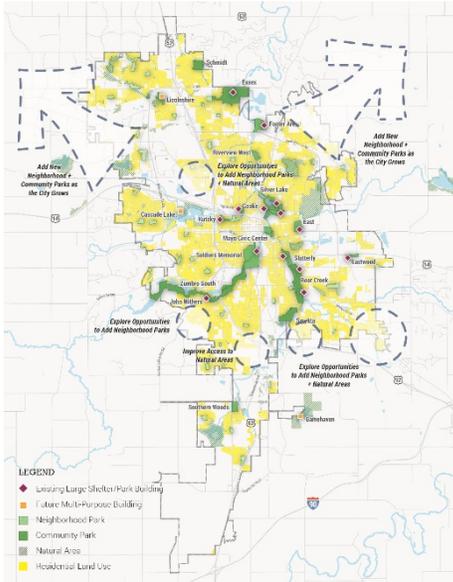
Natural Areas

Rochester has thousands of acres of natural areas, defined as an outdoor space one (1) acre or larger where native and naturalized vegetation is the dominant feature and where public access is provided on a limited basis. Natural areas provide an important link between people and their environment. Planning for natural areas strives to provide a balance between public access and recreation with the need to protect and conserve natural resources.

1. Improve Access to Natural Areas.

- 1.1. Ensure residents have access to natural areas 1 acre or larger within $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 mile of their homes.
 - 1.1.1. Map the park and recreation system’s natural areas to better document location, size, and distribution.
 - 1.1.2. Seek opportunities to provide access to natural areas within subzones D and J.
 - 1.1.3. Identify and strategize to acquire areas of natural value or open space in growth areas outside of the City to ensure access to natural areas within $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile of new residential areas.
 - 1.1.4. Encourage interaction with natural areas by providing signage, wayfinding, and maps to guide people to natural areas.

- 1.2. Ensure residents have access to large natural areas with an ADA accessible trail within a long bike ride or short car ride from residences.
 - 1.2.1. Expand naturalized areas in the Central Zone around South Fork of the Zumbro River, Cascade Creek, or Bear Creek in the Central Zone, and ensure an ADA accessible trail loop in this area.
 - 1.2.2. Maintain at least one 20 acre or larger natural area in each of the Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast Zones.
 - 1.2.3. Expand trails in one of the 20 acre or larger natural areas in the NW zone to make an ADA Accessible loop.



Park and natural area improvement areas (an enlarged version can be found in Figure 5-1 on page 5-2)

2. Preserve Areas of Natural Value.

- 2.1. Support Biodiversity
 - 2.1.1. Create a Natural Resources Inventory that identifies, designates, and categorizes natural areas managed by Parks & Recreation by size and quality. Use the Natural Resources Inventory to develop Natural Resource Management Plans for designated areas. Prioritize the development of plans for environmental parks, linear parks, reservoirs, regional parks, and community parks.
 - 2.1.2. Establish technical expertise in natural area establishment and maintenance through hiring, professional development, and contracting.
- 2.2. Identify and prioritize the protection of natural areas that provide corridors/linkages between parks and other destinations.
- 2.3. Work with Public Works on stream bank erosion control efforts and utilize natural stream bank erosion control techniques instead of concrete armor or rip-rap.
- 2.4. Utilize land trusts, conservation easements, and partnerships to protect natural areas.
- 2.5. Coordinate with Rochester - Olmsted County Planning Department for the development of plans that outline preservation of natural areas in future private development areas.



Quarry Hill should be supported as the community hub for environmental education, nature-based programming, and natural area stewardship

3. Expand Nature-Based Programming, Outreach, and Education About Natural Areas.

- 3.1. Provide interpretive information about natural resources/habitat in environmental and regional parks, as well as at key features in other park components (i.e. Silver Lake).
- 3.2. Improve education/marketing of the value of natural areas.
- 3.3. Support Quarry Hill Nature Center as the community hub for environmental education, nature-based programming, and natural area stewardship.
 - 3.3.1. Work with the Friends of Quarry Hill to implement the development and natural resource recommendations from the 2015 Quarry Hill Master Plan and their strategic plan.
 - 3.3.2. Explore/support nature-based programming provided by the center at satellite locations across the city.



Planning for Future Parks & Natural Areas

Access to parks, natural areas, and outdoor recreation is vital to the long-term sustainability and livability of a community. Parks and public lands serve an essential role in preserving natural resources and wildlife habitat, protecting clean water and clean air, and providing open space for current and future generations. Parks and natural areas provide an essential connection for people of all ages and abilities to the life-enhancing benefits of nature and the outdoors. The quality of life for every person in Rochester is improved by clean, green and accessible parks and open space.

As such, it is critical to identify and preserve sensitive natural areas and open spaces that could be added to the current system to adequately support the area's growing population and future needs for parks, open spaces and natural areas. The strategic acquisition and preservation of these important landscapes can lead to a more robust and connected park and open spaces system, cleaner air and water, and enhanced wildlife habitat, and can produce economic benefits for the Rochester community. It is recommended that the land acquisition strategy uses a standards-based methodology for prioritizing key preservation areas. Figure 5-11 illustrates several potential sites in Rochester that should be considered for preservation. These include:

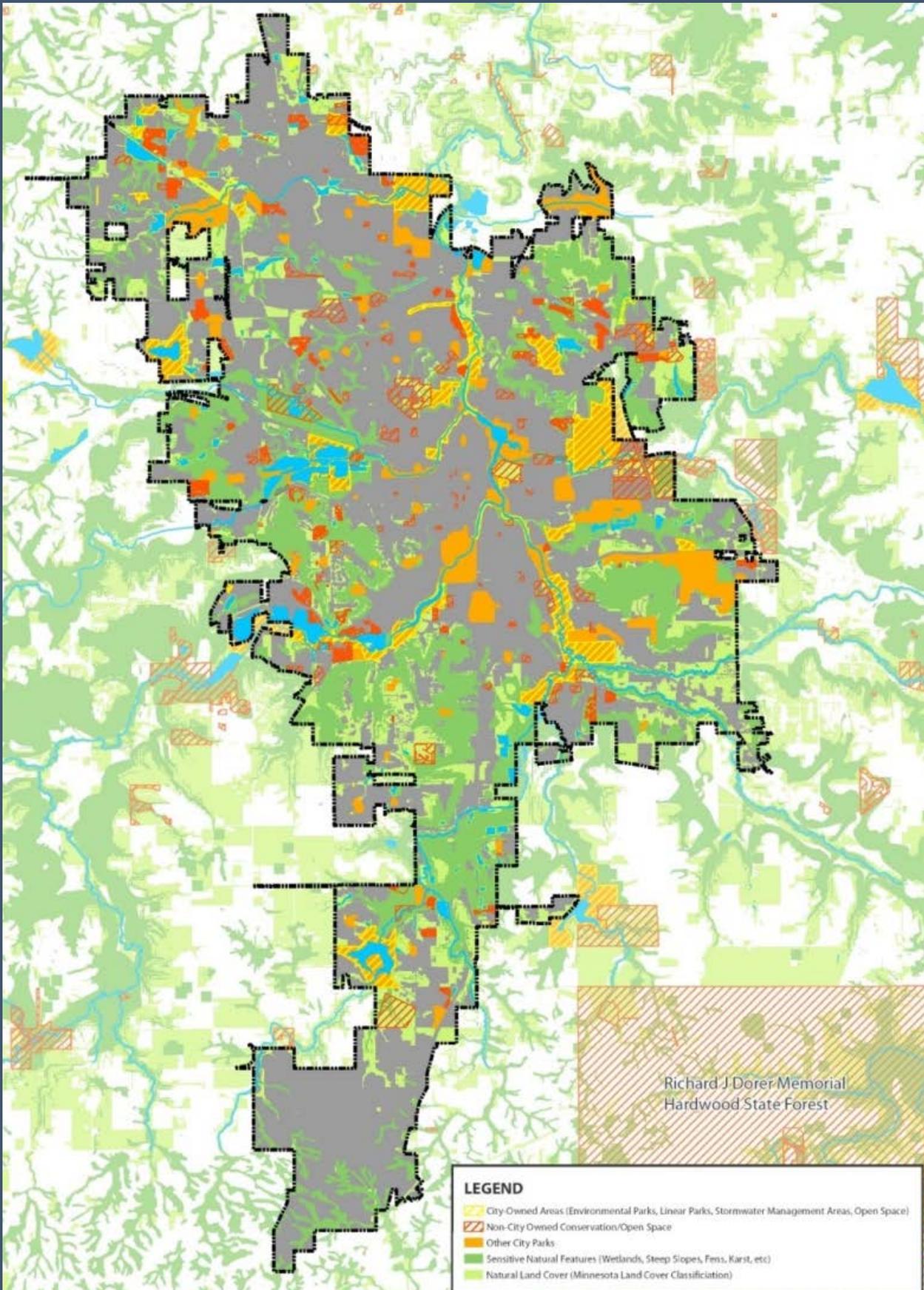
Sensitive Natural Features

- » *Steep slopes (>18%)*
- » *Fens, wetlands and hydric soils*
- » *Decorah edge*
- » *Karst features*

Areas of Natural Land Cover

- » *Forests and woodlands*
- » *Grasslands*
- » *Shrublands*

FIGURE 5-11: PRESERVATION AREAS



Programming

Users engage in recreation programming for enjoyment, health, skill development, socialization, enrichment, entertainment, physical fitness, and relaxation. In Rochester organizations and associations provide most of the programming and community events. Given the ongoing success of these partnerships in meeting the community's needs, the system plan focuses recommendations on expanding community gathering opportunities, ensuring programming gaps are addressed, and increasing awareness about opportunities.

1. Expand Opportunities for Local Community Gathering and Education.

- 1.1. Program and support partners' events to draw residents to parks and recreation facilities.
 - 1.1.1. Scale events appropriately to the type of park, such as concerts in community parks and picnics in neighborhood parks.
 - 1.1.2. Ensure there are winter sports and opportunities for social connections (sledding, skating, snowshoeing).
 - 1.1.3. Collaborate with cultural groups to provide community events in the parks.
 - 1.1.4. Establish and promote informal or self-directed recreation.
 - 1.1.5. Support open street festivals or public art forums that highlight interesting things about Rochester.
 - 1.1.6. Partner with the schools and other organizations to provide community education in the parks.
 - 1.1.7. Explore opportunities with partner organizations to share space for similar programming.
- 1.2. Encourage a sense of community at the neighborhood level by partnering with RNeighbors to host events, block parties, and neighborhood "nights out" at parks and park facilities to help strengthen relationships and the overall health of the community

2. Encourage Recreation Participation by All Rochester Residents, Regardless of Age Or Ability.

- 2.1. Maintain and expand the Adaptive Recreation program as necessary to meet needs.
 - 2.1.1. Annually analyze participation rates, requests, and user evaluations to determine program offerings.
 - 2.1.2. Explore partnerships with local organizations to diversify and expand offerings.



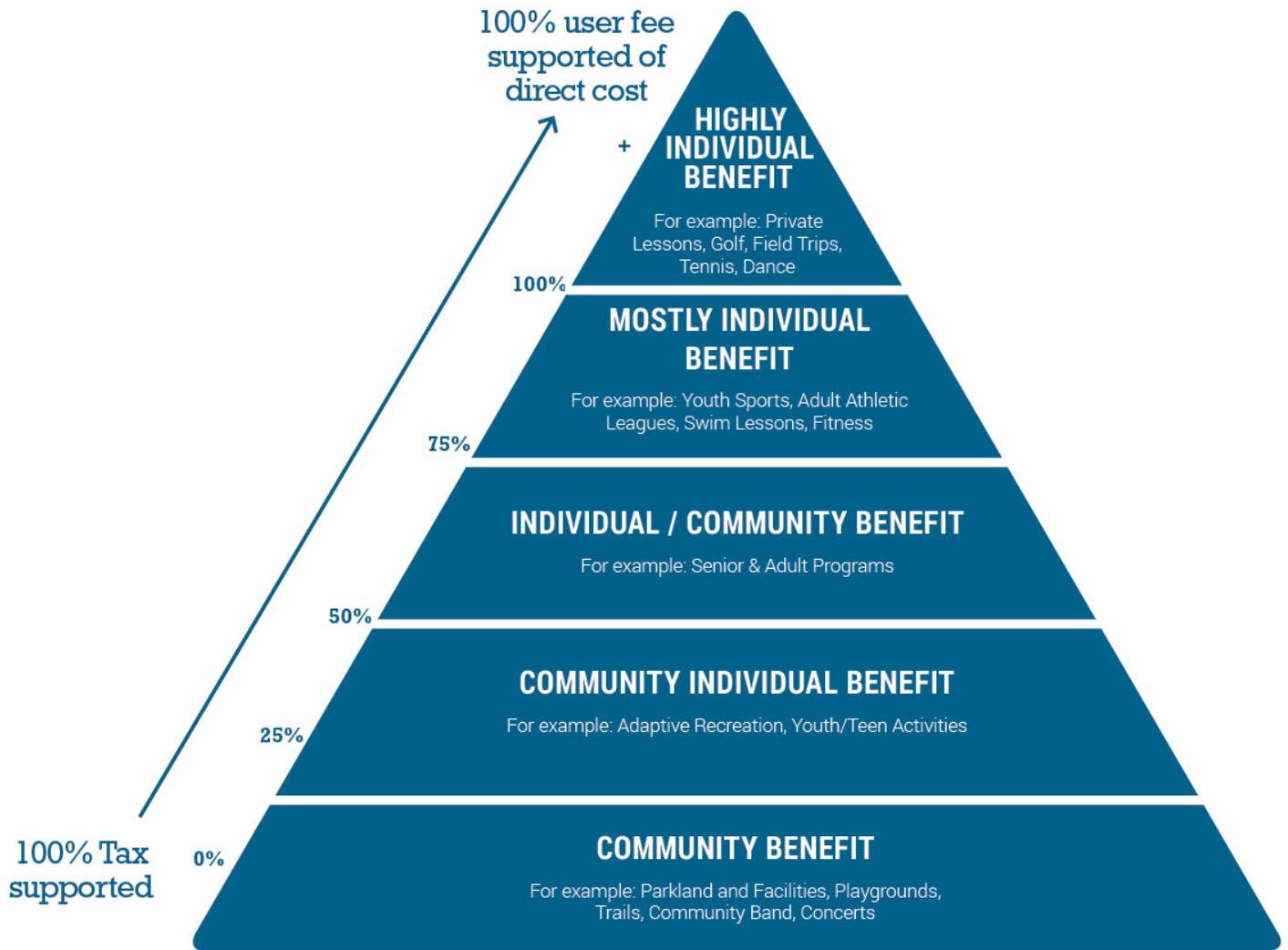
Utilize permanent park facilities as event space when possible



Promote active living at all ages

- 2.2. Expand opportunities for affordable or low-cost recreation within Rochester parks and recreation facilities.
 - 2.2.1. Ensure the tiered pricing structure (Figure 5-12) prioritizes community benefits over individual benefits.
 - 2.2.2. Provide grants and scholarships to eliminate financial barriers to City sponsored events and programs.
 - 2.2.3. Encourage associations that are supported by Parks and Recreation to provide grants and scholarships to eliminate financial barriers to participation.
 - 2.2.4. Organize informal winter sledding, snowshoeing, ice skating, and other events.
 - 2.2.5. Collaborate with partner groups to offer free and low-cost summer youth programming.
 - 2.2.6. Reduce transportation barriers by locating programming throughout the community. For example, distributing tennis lessons throughout the system rather than at one particular park.
- 2.3. Activate the downtown parks and open spaces with more destinations and activities year-round, 7 days a week, daytime and nighttime.
 - 2.3.1. Partner with local organizations and businesses on small events that activate downtown parks and open spaces.
 - 2.3.2. Establish a clear, criteria-based permitting system for vendors to operate in parks.
 - 2.3.3. Partner with local restaurants and food trucks to offer refreshments and snacks in parks and open spaces utilizing a concessionaire fee system.
- 2.4. Encourage, partner with, and support existing recreational clubs and associations in the city to fill programming gaps that the City cannot fill.
 - 2.4.1. Seek input from schools and residents to find overlaps in program offerings.
 - 2.4.2. Form a working group made up of city staff, community recreation leaders, and school representatives to meet quarterly to discuss programming needs.
 - 2.4.3. Work with partners to modify programming to meet the needs of diverse populations, such as offering times for female only fitness or swimming.

FIGURE 5-12: TIERED PRICING STRUCTURE



3. Expand Marketing and Awareness of Facilities And Programs.

- 3.1. Encourage use of park and recreational facilities for events, tournaments, and programming.
 - 3.1.1. Collaborate with Rochester Amateur Sports Commission, athletic organizations, and other partners to promote parks and facilities, using a clear, criteria-based process for doing so.
 - 3.1.2. Support community events and festivals to bring people into the parks (e.g. Rochesterfest, 4th of July).
 - 3.1.3. Ensure recognition of Parks and Recreation as a sponsoring partner by providing and requesting the use of Parks and Recreation logo on promotional materials and signage.
- 3.2. Ensure consistent communication between City staff, schools, and recreation organizations.
 - 3.2.1. Establish a regularly meeting working group of City staff, School representatives, recreation association representatives, and other members as necessary.
 17. Discuss status of recreational facilities used by organizations—cost, maintenance, updates needed;
 18. Manage expectations of the city and of the organizations;
 19. Discuss opportunities to work together to meet shared goals.
 - 3.2.2. Evaluate city staffing and duties to ensure sufficient capacity for coordinating and managing use of city facilities by recreation associations, volunteers, and city programs.
- 3.3. Use the parks website, local media, and other technology for promotion of recreation opportunities.
 - 3.3.1. Develop process and standards for publicizing community events using park and recreation facilities.
 - 3.3.2. Publicize partner organizations' opportunities on the front page or other easily accessible area.
 - 3.3.3. Expand parks and recreation outreach using social media and local media (paper/radio).



Support events like Rochesterfest

Sustainability

Sustainability in the park and recreation system focuses on minimizing impacts of park and facility development, operations and maintenance. This includes a wide range of activities aimed at reducing consumption of resources, minimizing impacts on waterways and natural areas, and promoting sustainable management of resources. With over 4,200 acres, there are many opportunities for the park and recreation system to positively impact the ecosystem and be a model for sustainable practices.

1. Innovate in Parks with Sustainable Design Practices.

- 1.1. Reduce impacts on waterways and ground water by incorporating stormwater best practices in park and facility design.
 - 1.1.1. Incorporate rain gardens, bio-swales, water retention, and permeable paving when feasible.
 - 1.1.2. Reduce impervious surfaces in the design of parks and facilities.
 - 1.1.3. Use cisterns and other water-saving methods to reduce water consumption.
 - 1.1.4. Establish 50-foot vegetation buffers around wetlands, rivers, ponds, reservoirs, and lakes on appropriate public land and parks.
- 1.2. Be 100% renewable energy-fueled by 2031.
 - 1.2.1. Use solar, wind, and geothermal where and when feasible for lighting, heating, and cooling.
 - 1.2.2. Improve energy efficiency of facilities when renovating and constructing new.
 - 1.2.3. Use native trees/shrubs planted in appropriate locations to conserve energy.

2. Become a Model for Sustainable Maintenance Practices.

- 2.1. Offer recycling options in community, athletic, and regional parks.
- 2.2. Manage the use of pesticides in parks consistent with the current plan.
 - 2.2.1. Utilize integrated pest management strategies to control nuisance plants, weeds, insects, rodents, etc.
 - 2.2.2. Implement a turf conversion program to transition underutilized turf areas to forest or other native cover.



Stormwater management practices reduce impacts on waterways and groundwater



Utilize renewable energy generation techniques



Vegetative buffers along roadways and around water resources protect water quality



Native Prairie Plantings



Low Maintenance, No Mow Lawn



Stormwater Bioswale



Stormwater Plantings

Pesticides, Parks, and People: Strategies for reducing the use of toxic chemicals in parklands

Lawn space in the public realm has many benefits; it provides a more aesthetically pleasing and softer surface for play and leisure when compared to hard-packed dirt, it stabilizes dust, absorbs rather than reflects sunlight, providing some cooling, and absorbs carbon dioxide. While these are beneficial, lawns are still monocultures that support fewer species of insects, birds, mammals and other organisms that work together to foster an ecosystem that provides clean air, soil, and water. In addition, the inputs of chemicals and energy required to maintain a turfgrass lawn to the typical standard of an impeccable green carpet are high. Several adjustments to current practices can result in lower rates of pesticide applications (including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and other substances meant for destroying pests), reduced labor and energy inputs, reduced human exposure to carcinogens, and increases in habitat. Strategies include:

- » *Integrated Pest Management or IPM, addresses pests such as weeds or insects by utilizing a combination of biological controls (use of natural enemies), maintenance practices, increased tolerance of smaller infestations, and pesticides when needed.*
- » *Education about the benefits of more sustainable alternatives and appreciating a more natural appearance of parks.*
- » *Development of low-impact lawns that include the use of fescue grasses, buffalo grass, and other broadleaf, meadow-like components, which require less water and fertilizer than bluegrass.*
- » *Conversion of underutilized turfgrass areas into native tall grass meadows.*
- » *Pesticide-free Maintenance Practices such as crack sealing, mowing, propane weed burning, hand weeding, tillage, and mulching.*
- » *Designing for reduced pesticide use includes utilizing low maintenance, spreading groundcovers and shrubs in landscape beds, mulch in tree wells, and fewer fence lines.*
- » *Modeling existing Pesticide Free Parks Programs such as those of Eugene and Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington.*



Clear invasive species, like buckthorn, to protect/convert back to native landscapes



Pollinator-friendly practices support biodiversity

- 2.2.3. Look for opportunities to convert existing landscape areas (non-native/introduced species) into native plantings.
- 2.3. Use vegetation management to protect water quality.
 - 2.3.1. Use natural stream bank erosion control methods.
 - 2.3.2. Minimize the application to turf of chemicals that will leach into ground and surface water.
- 2.4. Experiment with sustainability pilot programs.
 - 2.4.1. Test out a pesticide-free park.
 - 2.4.2. Create a pollinator-friendly lawn that incorporates flowering perennials such as white clover, fescue grass, and self-heal.
- 2.5. Raise public awareness about sustainability.
 - 2.5.1. Publicize sustainability efforts undertaken by the City via social media, interpretation, and other marketing information.
 - 2.5.2. Publicize sustainability efforts undertaken by the City via social media, interpretation, and other marketing information.

3. Continue to Implement Progressive Urban Forestry Practices.

- 3.1. In continued recognition of the importance of a healthy urban forest to the health of the community, support and encourage the planting of trees and the care of trees in the community.
 - 3.1.1. Continue to follow and implement the Urban Forest Management Plan.
 - 3.1.2. Continue to follow and implement the Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan.
 - 3.1.3. Continue to follow and enforce Rochester City Ordinance 47 - Tree Management.
 - 3.1.4. Continue to follow and enforce the Boulevard Tree Planting requirements found in the Land Development Manual.

Public Health

As host and home of the Mayo Clinic, Rochester is focused on helping its residents and visitors make healthy choices about how they live, work, learn, and recreate. The park and recreation system serves a valuable role in providing facilities for many activities. Leveraging that system to its maximum benefit requires broad partnerships with other units of government, local organizations, health care facilities, and educational institutions.

1. Leverage Parks and Recreation to Improve Public Health and Well-Being.

- 1.1. Encourage active living.
 - 1.1.1. Work with Public Works to support implementation of trail recommendations to promote healthy lifestyles.
 - 1.1.2. Support the introduction of a bike share system in Rochester.
 - 1.1.3. Add outdoor exercise equipment adjacent to playgrounds to support adult activity while children are playing.
 - 1.1.4. Increase exposure to the array of recreational opportunities by providing low-cost and low commitment trial programs targeted towards children, seniors, and immigrants.
 - 1.1.5. Create an annual winter program to address seasonal affective disorder by providing a day for free or reduced equipment rental rates (cross country skis, fat tire bikes, etc.) and instruction for outdoor activities.
 - 1.1.6. Evaluate and address safety in the parks and along trails during design, development, redevelopment, and vegetation management.
- 1.2. Seek and support potential partners in addressing public health.
 - 1.2.1. Support private entrepreneurs who may want to provide programming in the parks by developing vendor selection criteria and a permitting process.
 - 1.2.2. Seek collaborations with health care providers and local higher education institutions to implement programming/events/outreach/research opportunities.
 - 1.2.3. Work with local arborists/ecologists/horticulturists to communicate the benefits of trees, forests, and habitat on air quality, water quality, and human health.



Fitness equipment along trails and next to playgrounds for adults



Build on and enhance Rochester's healthy city image

2. Leverage Parks and Recreation to Build on Rochester's Healthy City Image.

- 2.1. Create a 'Find Your Healthy Place' campaign in the park system.
 - 2.1.1. Bring health specialists to park events to provide information to park visitors.
 - 2.1.2. Use social media to promote the campaign and events.
 - 2.1.3. Establish a permitting policy to support the planting, maintaining, harvesting, and distribution of edible vegetation in parks.
 - 2.1.4. Seek partners to co-host gardening and cooking demonstrations at existing garden plots.
 - 2.1.5. Initiate activities in the parks, such as a 'Count your Steps in the Park' day.
 - 2.1.6. Work with individual artists and arts groups to create interactive installations that address the correlation between parks/natural area visits and mental/physical health.
 - 2.1.7. Collaborate with local schools to encourage the use of parks as outdoor classroom space.
- 2.2. Explore and communicate the health benefits of being outdoors and interacting with nature by developing and maintaining a public service campaign to market the benefits of unstructured nature play for childhood development and the mental and physical health benefits for teens, adults, and seniors.

Public Art

A thriving arts and cultural community is considered vital to creating a vibrant community. The arts enhance livability and economic vitality, bring diverse groups of people together, celebrate history and heritage, enhance learning, raise awareness of social issues, and bring beauty and meaning to the built environment. The park and recreation system provides a place for art and cultural expression, and the City of Rochester can foster public art through the development of meaningful relationships and partnerships with individuals, organizations, and institutions throughout the community.

1. Incorporate Permanent Public Art Into The Fabric Of Parks And Trails.

- 1.1. Seek opportunities to use artist-designed park features rather than standard catalog pieces when repairing, replacing, and developing new amenities in neighborhood and community parks.
 - 1.1.1. Involve artists in park and trail design teams at the beginning of projects to ensure the exploration and inclusion of interactive art features within new development and construction.
 - 1.1.2. Include permanent artistic furnishings such as artist-designed benches, picnic tables, lighting, signage, bike racks, fencing, and trash receptacles within parks and along trails where appropriate. Ensure maintenance and replacement costs for public art are incorporated into department budgets and capital improvement plans.
 - 1.1.3. Explore the creation of a themed park that has multiple, theme-related public art pieces.
- 1.2. Use public art to support and interpret the existing natural, cultural, health, and recreational themes in Rochester.
 - 1.2.1. Develop nature-themed public art within the environmental parks and natural areas in and around Rochester.
 - 1.2.2. Find partners within the community to develop public art that emphasizes and promotes healthy lifestyles to residents and visitors of Rochester.
 - 1.2.3. Reach out to cultural groups in the development of public art that can highlight the community's diversity.



Install permanent public art displays



Support temporary public art displays and performances

2. Include Temporary and Seasonal Art in Rochester Parks.

- 2.1. Develop partnerships with local artists and other private arts organizations to create temporary public art installations in parks around the city.
 - 2.1.1. Create a public art working group made up of city staff, local artists, and citizen representatives that meets a few times per year to discuss opportunities for public art displays.
 - 2.1.2. Aim for one temporary art display per season, such as winter ice sculptures downtown, paddling and rowing related art along the river in the summer, and harvest/local food art in the fall.
 - 2.1.3. Partner with school groups to develop public art in local parks.
- 2.2. Encourage the use of parks for performance art.
 - 2.2.1. Identify, develop, and maintain a set of outdoor performance spaces distributed throughout the City. These spaces should range in size and formality.
 - 2.2.2. Partner with school groups, the City's Civic Music Program, the Greater Rochester Arts and Cultural Trust, C4, and others to offer theatrical and musical performances in city parks.
 - 2.2.3. Collaborate with cultural groups to offer performances in local parks.
- 2.3. Incorporate public art initiatives into existing and future events and festivals in Rochester.
 - 2.3.1. Work with event planners to incorporate and suggest opportunities for art displays and interactive art as part of all future events
 - 2.3.2. Partner with surrounding communities and arts organizations to promote local and regional art to Rochester residents and visitors

Management and Operations

While the results are visible throughout, management and operations rarely make the list of the public's desired improvements to a park and recreation system. However, management and operations practices are important for the long-range success and economic sustainability of the park and recreation system. Recommendations for Rochester focus on improving operational efficiencies and capabilities, maintenance, communications, and programming evaluation.

1. Improve Operational Efficiencies and Capabilities.

- 1.1. Disperse and decentralize maintenance facilities to reduce travel time across the city to provide routine maintenance of parks and facilities.
 - 1.1.1. Relocate the existing maintenance facility adjacent to Mayo Field to a more functional location and ensure the new facility is sufficient in size and configuration to meet the department's operational needs.
 - 1.1.2. Continue to implement the Essex Park maintenance facility as a north operations satellite facility.
- 1.2. Ensure Park and Recreation's ability to efficiently and effectively achieve its mission when responding to requests to address the needs of other departments.
- 1.3. Explore options to maximize the use of volunteers to support park operations and programming.
 - 1.3.1. Expand partnerships with local neighborhood groups to support improvements and activities in their neighborhood park.
 - 1.3.2. Collaborate with local groups that can oversee volunteers for specific activities (i.e. buckthorn removal, community event, etc.)

2. Efficiently Maintain Assets at a High Level.

- 2.1. Design parks and facilities with maintenance in mind and implement a life-cycle approach.
 - 2.1.1. In developing new assets prepare a feasibility study that includes the following as appropriate: a needs assessment, projected user/participate analysis, development funding method, and lifecycle cost analysis.
 - 2.1.2. Ensure adequate access for maintenance vehicles.
 - 2.1.3. Incorporate strategies for turf maintenance including field rotation, irrigation, etc.

Asset Management Plan

An Asset Management Plan catalogs maintenance, renovation, and replacement needs for the majority of the City's park assets. The purpose of the plan is to establish an accurate inventory of park assets and their conditions to help identify and prioritize needs for renovation and replacement. This inventory would include playgrounds, sports facilities, beaches, and amenities like shelters, restrooms and benches. Asset Management Plans assist in identifying and communicating system needs, and can also assist in sufficient planning for long-term maintenance and replacement costs.



Utilize volunteers for parks maintenance and restoration when possible



Friends of Indian Heights Park is an example of how local volunteers can contribute significantly to the success of the park and recreation system. Friends of Indian Heights provides stewardship, advocacy, and education for the preservation and restoration of Indian Heights Park and Thompson Mill Race Park. This includes coordinating and training volunteers for projects like oak savanna restoration and removal of invasive plants (like the buckthorn removal displayed above).

- 2.2. Develop and formalize maintenance priorities.
 - 2.2.1. Develop tiered maintenance level standards for routine maintenance to guide the most intensive to the least intensive maintenance.
 - 2.2.2. Write maintenance policies and schedules as part of the parks maintenance manual.
 - 2.2.3. Prioritize snow removal in areas which become dangerous without immediate attention.
 - 2.2.4. Update the winter trail maintenance policy on an annual basis, re-evaluating and amending it based on factors like historical maintenance, commuting routes, safe routes to school, and requests from residents.
 - 2.2.5. Standardize athletic field maintenance and construction standards.
- 2.3. Annually inspect all facilities and amenities.
 - 2.3.1. Develop an asset management system that tracks asset condition, critical systems maintenance, and repair and rehabilitation requirements to inform park and facility investment decisions.
 - 2.3.2. Prioritize safety upgrades.
 - 2.3.3. Replace outdated park equipment and materials with high-efficiency models and high-quality, low-maintenance materials.
 - 2.3.4. Annually prepare a five-year Capital Improvement Plan.

3. Conduct Highly-Responsive and Engaging Communications with the Public.

- 3.1. Improve the department's web presence.
 - 3.1.1. Encourage interaction by allowing users the ability to send in or post their pictures from special events or programs.
 - 3.1.2. Leverage the website to obtain feedback on programs, events, parks and facilities, and customer service.
 - 3.1.3. Explore enhancements like Google Translate to allow users to translate pages into language of choice.
 - 3.1.4. Develop an app that provides parks and facilities information, events, trails, hours of operation, contact information, etc.
- 3.2. Expand the current marketing message.
 - 3.2.1. Dedicate staff time to marketing and communications.
 - 3.2.2. Communicate collaborations and active partnerships by developing, updating, and sharing on an annual basis a master list of partnerships.

- 3.2.3. Communicate the true cost of offering services to the users to ensure they are educated and knowledgeable about what they pay versus what the offerings cost.

4. Ensure Engaging and Well-Utilized Programs.

- 4.1. Create ongoing feedback loops to track for trends in program and event performance
 - 4.1.1. Intercept surveys, online surveys and APP for real-time customer feedback.
 - 4.1.2. Use Customer Feedback to enhance services
 - 4.1.3. Conduct post-program evaluations
 - 4.1.4. Periodic user surveys to identify needs, changing trends, and gaps to address.
- 4.2. Formalize program and event development
 - 4.2.1. Conduct pilot programs/events with follow up surveys or focus groups
 - 4.2.2. Continue program innovation by eliminating and repositioning programs with declining participation in favor of new trends or those better aligned with community needs



Online surveys provide an opportunity to collect real-time customer feedback



Chapter 6:

Implementation

The Parks and Recreation System Plan will guide decision-making by the Park Board, staff, partners, and the public over the next 20 years. The Implementation Chapter is intended to provide a framework for decision-making and public investment by identifying priority actions and improvements, associated costs, and potential funding sources. The chapter also serves as a toolkit that guides how to evaluate new initiatives and projects that were not contemplated in the development of the system plan. This toolkit is supplemented by the activity delivery guidelines which describe the recommended frequency for providing recreational facilities in the community. Not to be overlooked, the Implementation Chapter ends with recommendations for evaluating the success of the plan.

Parks & Recreation Foundation

A parks and recreation foundation is an independent non-profit that is affiliated with the Park and Recreation Department and whose mission is to support the system. A foundation's focus can range from supporting small, individual park projects to significant fundraising arms that create lasting impact through endowments. Foundations can be the recipient of tax-deductible donations and sponsorships, and in some cases can apply for grants for which cities are ineligible. They also can assist with advocacy, citizen engagement, and volunteer development. It is important to recognize that Foundations can take additional staff time, so care needs to be taken in identifying the organization's mission.

Funding Recommendations

While a park and recreation system is an essential component of the quality of life in a community, ensuring sufficient funding can be challenging when compared to other city services such as water, sewer, and public safety. To achieve the vision set forth in the park and recreation system plan additional investment will be needed. This investment will not only be needed to support system expansion, but for the replacement of existing system components.

1. Ensure adequate funding to accomplish plan goals

- 1.1. Identify and regularly communicate system funding needs.
 - 1.1.1. Develop an asset management program.
 - 1.1.2. Evaluate and incorporate into budgets ongoing operational and life-cycle costs when making facility capital decisions.
 - 1.1.3. Establish cost recovery information and policies for programs, park rentals, and other services that clearly communicate the costs associated, the level of community/individual/special interest benefit, and the associated fee.
- 1.2. Expand & diversify funding sources.
 - 1.2.1. Increase Parks and Recreation's share of the general fund.
 - 1.2.2. Increase funding from the General Fund for maintenance work.
 - 1.2.3. Establish an Infrastructure Replacement Reserve Fund to cover major capital repairs and replacements.
 - 1.2.4. Support the creation of a non-profit parks and recreation foundation to support promotion and fundraising.
 - 1.2.5. Explore the use of a franchise fee to fund maintenance or specific programs.
 - 1.2.6. Explore a bond referendum for a specific package of capital improvements.
 - 1.2.7. Pursue legislative authority similar to Minneapolis and St. Paul to capture park dedication through the building permit process.
 - 1.2.8. Continue to strategically pursue grants focused on those whose funding amounts are sufficient to outweigh administrative requirements.
 - 1.2.9. Evaluate the potential value of sponsorship for all assets, programs, and events in the system based on user demographics and participation/visitation. Use the data

- to create an enhanced sponsorship catalog to target local and regional sponsors and corporate partnerships.
- 1.2.10. Explore collaborative funding opportunities in areas like public health, public art, programming, and sustainability.
 - 1.2.11. Continue to work collaboratively with Public Works and Olmsted County Planning on development, trail and bikeway projects, and environmental initiatives.
 - 1.2.12. Pilot the use of a crowdfunding tool for small, targeted projects (kickstarter.org, razoo.com or NRPA Fund Your Park).
 - 1.2.13. Continue to build and enhance partnerships with schools, athletic associations, nonprofits and others.
- 1.3. Maximize use of volunteers to support system development and operations.

Public-Private Partnerships

Public-Private Partnerships are already a key component of the Parks and Recreation System. The level of partnership is so extensive that many in the community are not aware of when the City is providing the service and when it is a partner. Some public-private partnerships are relatively simple, a non-profit holding an event using park facilities, for example, while others can be quite complex, such as a public-private partnership to develop a regional park or facility. As public-private partnerships are developed, the following should be considered:

- » *Ensure both entities share the same vision and define success at the beginning of the project.*
- » *Provide a consistent, fair, and open review process for the development of partnerships.*
- » *Assess and align strengths of each entity (for example, a private vendor may be more efficient and effective in providing concessions or renting equipment).*
- » *Conduct an independent financial analysis of the viability of the partnership*
- » *Negotiate formal agreements that clearly identify responsibilities, expectations (type of service, hours, fees), revenue/expense sharing, etc.*
- » *Make sure partnerships are not concentrated to only the highest quality sites, but instead serve a broad spectrum of the community.*
- » *Promote cultural sensitivity and sustainability in partners.*
- » *Recognize public staff time will be needed to manage partnership.*

The City may find it beneficial to further formalize its public-private partnership process. The City of Portland, Oregon and Montgomery County Parks, Maryland may be good resources for the development of policies and procedures.

Priorities

Priorities are drawn from the recommendations identified in Chapter 5 and are organized into the four areas of facilities, marketing, programming/ events, and operations. Because each area's success is important, prioritization across the four areas were not made, which will allow each area to receive needed attention and resources. The ability of the City to achieve these priorities will be a function of staff time and funding. While some initiatives may require a significant investment of either time or funding for a one-time improvement, others will involve a minimal amount of time on an on-going basis. It is also likely that some of the lower priorities that are lower on a list may be completed sooner than higher priorities due to funding or partnership opportunities.

Implementation phasing should be flexible and dependent on regular project prioritization based on needs, funding availability, and partnership opportunities. Depending on funding availability, the City may need to explore the phasing of larger capital improvements, such as like regional park development. While not ideal because it is generally more expensive and extends the time period the park is out of service, phasing does ensure there is funding available for other capital improvements at the same time.

Table 6-1 provides a prioritized list of capital improvements or actions for each category. Costs provided are planning level estimates that need to be further refined with detailed planning. Costs are for project construction and do not include the professional services of surveyors, engineers, architects, etc. Professional services may add 20 to 30% to individual project costs.

TABLE 6-1: PRIORITY CAPITAL IMPORVEMENT PROJECTS & ACTIONS

Initiative	Notes	Cost
Facilities		
Development of Cascade Lake Regional Park	Based on Cascade Lake Regional Park Master Plan	\$ 18 million
Completion of Quarry Hill Park and Nature Center Improvements	Based on Quarry Hill Park and Nature Center Master Plan	\$500,000
Investment in land to allow the movement of the sports complexes off of leased land	Cost factors include location, quality, and size. Consideration should be given to the distribution of facilities across the City and opportunities for partnership.	Varies
Aquatics	Assumes Soldiers Field replaced, Silver Lake removed, and interactive water features or river access in each of five zones	\$7 to \$15 million
Modernization of existing facilities	Assumes 17 shelters at \$250,000 each and 40 playgrounds at \$50,000 each	\$6.25 million
Nature Play Areas Distributed throughout the City		\$625,000
Development of Gamehaven Regional Park	Utilize the Gamehaven Regional Park Master Plan	\$14 million
Renovation & Reuse of the former Silver Lake Fire Station	Facility master plan recommended to guide this effort.	\$600,000
Addition of user amenities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Assumes 1/3 of Neighborhood Parks receive 20 to 25 shade trees, 2 to 4 picnic tables, 2 to 4 benches, water fountain, and bike rack. 2) Assumes all Community Parks receive 40 to 50 shade trees, 8 to 12 picnic tables, 8 to 12 benches, and 2 to 4 bike racks 	\$1.1 to \$1.8 million
Renovation of Mayo Field		Varies
Additional basketball courts to serve areas of need	Adding \$40,000 in courts at five locations	\$200,000
Complex for football, lacrosse, and rugby	Assumes a 12 to 14 field complex with concessions and lighting.	\$2.1 million
Improvements to Watson Sports Complex		Varies
Development of multi-purpose buildings	Addition of buildings at Lincolnshire, at a cost of \$750,000 each	\$2.25 million
Expansion to Skate Park	Seek partnership opportunities with local non-profit	\$250,000
Upgrading of Golf Course Club Houses	\$400,000 for replacement of three club houses	\$1.2 million
Marketing		
Improve department website and social media presence		Staff can address
Develop process and standards for publicizing community events that use park and recreation facilities	Explore how department website can be used to market public events being held in park and recreation system	Staff can address
Improve system awareness and navigation through improved signage, wayfinding, and maps	Build on recent investments.	\$250,000
Raise public awareness of value of natural areas, sustainability, public health, etc.	Collaboration and partnerships will be needed.	Additional Staffing Needed
Raise public awareness of the positive impact of the park and recreation system		Additional Staffing Needed
Ensure recognition of Parks and Recreation as sponsoring partner		Staff can address
Provide interpretation about natural resources/habitat		Additional Staffing and Funding Needed
Develop, update, and annually share list of partnerships		Staff can address

Initiative	Notes	Cost
Programming + Events		
Program and support partners' events to draw residents to park and recreation facilities	See Programming 1.1 – explore winter opportunities, partnerships with cultural groups, informal/self-directed activities, and other partnerships.	Additional Staffing and Funding Needed
Low-cost/low commitment trial programs	See Public Health 1.1 – target youth, seniors, and immigrants with low cost/low commitment opportunities to try new activities like tennis or snowshoeing	Additional Staffing Needed
Activities for public health (“Find Your Healthy Place” campaign)	See Public Health 2.1 – explore activities like cooking demonstrations, count your steps in the park, health specialists in the park, etc.	Additional Staffing Needed
Activate downtown parks and open spaces	Coordinate with other city departments and DMC	Additional Staffing and Funding
Policies for private vendors to provide programming in parks		Staff can address
Public art working group to support development of temporary art installations, performances, cultural events	See Public Art recommendations.	Staff can address
Operations		
Provide higher level of service for care/maintenance/cleanliness	Note that modernization of facilities may address some of public perception	Additional Staffing Needed
Expand volunteerism		Additional Staffing Needed
Document, analyze, and plan for the expansion of the natural trail system	See Trails 1.2.1	Additional Staffing Needed
Complete a Natural Resource Inventory	Natural Resource Inventory basis for developing	Varies
Complete individual Park Master Plans (Silver Lake, Lincolnshire, Essex, and Kutzky)		\$300,000
Develop an Asset Management System		Additional Staffing Needed
Relocate the Maintenance Facility		Varies

TABLE 6-2: FUNDING SOURCES

Initiative	General Funds	Park Dedication	Grants	Partnerships	Donations	State Aid Funds	Park Bond Referendum	Utility Fee
System Planning (Asset Management Plan, Park/Facility Master Planning, Natural Resource Planning, Trail Planning)	●			∩				
Parkland Acquisition	●	●	○	∩	∩		●	
Modernization (replacement of shelters, playgrounds, etc.)	●			∩	∩		○	∩
User Amenities (benches, shade, restrooms, water fountains, etc.)	●			∩	∩		○	
Park and Facility Development (fields, courts, playgrounds, etc.)	●	●	○	○	∩		●	
System Wayfinding	●		∩	∩	∩			
Expand Pedestrian-Bicycle Network	○	○	○	∩		○	●	○
Natural Resources Management	○		○	∩	∩		●	∩
Public Art and Public Health Initiatives	∩		○	●	∩			
Programming	●		∩	●	∩			
Neighborhood and Community Events	○		∩	●	∩			

KEY	Best Funding Source	Likely Funding Source	Possible Funding Source
	●	○	∩

Funding Sources

Achieving the vision and mission for the park and recreation system will take additional funding, not only for big, exciting new facilities like a regional park or interactive water feature, but for neighborhood park revitalization, new programs, and outreach, etc. It is anticipated that the City will use multiple methods to fund the system. Table 6-2 Funding Sources highlights the types of funding sources that may be appropriate for various types of initiatives. The table is followed by brief descriptions of each of the funding sources.

General Funds

General funds can and should be used to develop and maintain the parks and recreation system. General funds are the primary funding source for on-going maintenance, operations, and amenities. Most grants also have a matching requirement, which is often fulfilled with general funds.

Dedicated Tax Levy

A city can hold a referendum for a dedicated tax levy with proceeds directed specifically for parks and recreation. This levy can be used for capital projects as well as operations and maintenance. The proceeds may be in place of general funds or be supplemented by general funds. The advantage of a dedicated tax levy is that parks and recreation receives a more stable source of funding and does not have to compete with other city priorities for funding on an annual basis.

Bonding

General Obligation Bonds and Revenue Bonds provide another source of implementation funding for new public facilities, as well as repairs and/or upgrades to existing facilities.

General Park Bond Issue

Residents can decide to raise revenue through a permanent or temporary tax increase dedicated for specific purposes such as park, trail, and bikeway improvements and maintenance. These funds are usually provided through bonds approved as part of a voter referendum.

State Aid Funds

State aid funds are available for pedestrian and bicycle improvements on state aid streets. This funding source is particularly useful at the time of street construction or re-construction. Rochester has a process for evaluating needed trail and sidewalk improvements as part of capital improvement projects.

Park and Trail Dedication

Minnesota Statutes allow local governments to require dedication of land or cash in-lieu of land for parks and trails from new subdivisions. The dedication must be reasonable and rationally related to the recreation demand created by the development. Cities can also require dedication of right-of-way or easements for sidewalks or trails.

Rochester has a park dedication ordinance that recognizes the impacts that increased residents, visitors, and employees have on the park and recreation system. It seeks to ensure that areas are preserved for future parks. It also establishes cash in-lieu of land fees where the dedication of land is not feasible or practical; will not create a site useable for park purposes; or would be duplicative of facilities already available. Fees are used within the same quadrant from which they were collected.

Revisions to the park dedication ordinance are being considered simultaneously to this system plan. These updates should reflect the access and distribution recommendations of this system plan, as well as the park classification system established.

Utility/Franchise Fees

Franchise fees are included on the monthly bill that customers receive from a utility, such as natural gas, electricity or cable. The fee can be a flat amount each month or a percentage of the monthly bill. A franchise fee can be implemented with an ordinance, which must be approved by the City Council. About 4% of communities participating in HKGi's 2015 Park Finance and Dedication Survey use utility fees as a source of financing.

School Districts

The City partners with Rochester Public Schools in a variety of ways, including the use of athletic facilities and for programming. Open communication between the two entities is important for continued collaboration. Communication should occur on at least an annual basis about planned projects and additional opportunities to jointly manage public facilities and provide programming.

Partnerships

Public and private partnerships have been key to the development of the park and recreation system. These relationships have led to the development of parks, operation of athletic facilities, development and implementation of community programming and events, and natural resource management. Partnerships will continue to be important for both facilities and programming. Organizations with partner funding can also provide assistance with design, outreach and maintenance. Partnerships and relationships with private businesses can also result in easements and use agreements for trails across private land.

Donations

Private donations are another potential funding source. These may be financial donations from individuals or area corporations, or donations of labor from recreation clubs or use agreements. Programs such as "adopt-a-trail" or "adopt-a-park" by an organization, business, or individuals have been used in many communities to help with maintenance tasks and raise awareness.

Grants

Grants are a way to make Rochester's dollars go further. The City has been successful at securing grant funding and should continue to pursue opportunities when potential award outweigh the costs for applying or administrating. Below is a sample of grant opportunities that may be available, along with websites to visit for more information.

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission

Website: www.gmrptcommission.org

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission was established in 2013 to assist with system planning and recommendations regarding grants funded by the Legacy Parks and Trails Fund. The commission focuses on counties and cities outside of the seven-county metropolitan area for parks and trails of regional significance. GMRPTC is a source of funding for those parks that are designated as regional parks through the GMRPTC process. In Rochester, Cascade Lake, Gamehaven, and Quarry Hill Parks all have regional designation.

Minnesota DNR

Website: www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/index.html

The Minnesota DNR is one of the most comprehensive resources when it comes to state funding for park and trail programs. They offer a variety of grant programs and technical assistance. Current programs provide assistance for cross country skiing trails, mountain biking trails, horseback riding trails, and recreational trails. Some programs also offer assistance for the development of parks or for trail amenities such as restrooms, lightning, benches, etc. Each of the Minnesota DNR grant programs is unique. The DNR should be consulted before pursuing a grant to clarify funding availability and qualifications.

Minnesota DOT

Website: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/grants/>

A portion of most trail or bikeway improvement projects funded through Minnesota DOT is from federal dollars. Examples of programs typically funding trail or sidewalk improvement projects include Safe Routes to School or the Transportation Alternatives Program managed by the District 6 ATP. Given the size of these grants the City should begin preparing in advance for future applications by identifying the type of improvement, the right-of-way needs, preliminary layout, and cost estimates.

Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment

On Nov. 4 2008, Minnesota voters approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to the Minnesota State Constitution which increased the general sales and use tax rate by three-eighths of one percentage point (0.375%) to 6.875% and dedicated the additional proceeds for the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, the Outdoor Heritage Fund, Clean Water Fund, and Parks and Trails Fund.

Funding from the Legacy Amendment is administered by a variety of agencies such as the Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency, Department of Health, Historical Society, Minnesota State Arts Board and regional art councils. A number of new grant programs were created. Information about grant opportunities can be found on individual state department and organization websites.

Foundations & Non-Profits

There are foundations and non-profits that are interested in fulfilling their missions by supporting local projects. There are a number of on-line tools that can assist with the process of identifying additional foundations that may provide financial support for park, trail, and bikeway improvements. The Minnesota Council of Foundations is a great starting point for identifying foundations. Another good starting point is to consider the businesses within Rochester and identifying those that have a foundation or charitable giving department. In addition to retailers and manufacturers, be sure to consider businesses such as the railroad, energy providers and communications companies.

General Capital & Operations & Maintenance Costs

The following table is a tool the City can use to initially evaluate and budget for new improvements. Equally important to the initial capital costs for a project are ongoing operations and maintenance costs. Adequately budgeting operations and maintenance ensures that facilities fulfill life expectancy and that parks remain safe and welcoming.

TABLE 6-3: GENERAL CAPITAL & MAINTENANCE COSTS

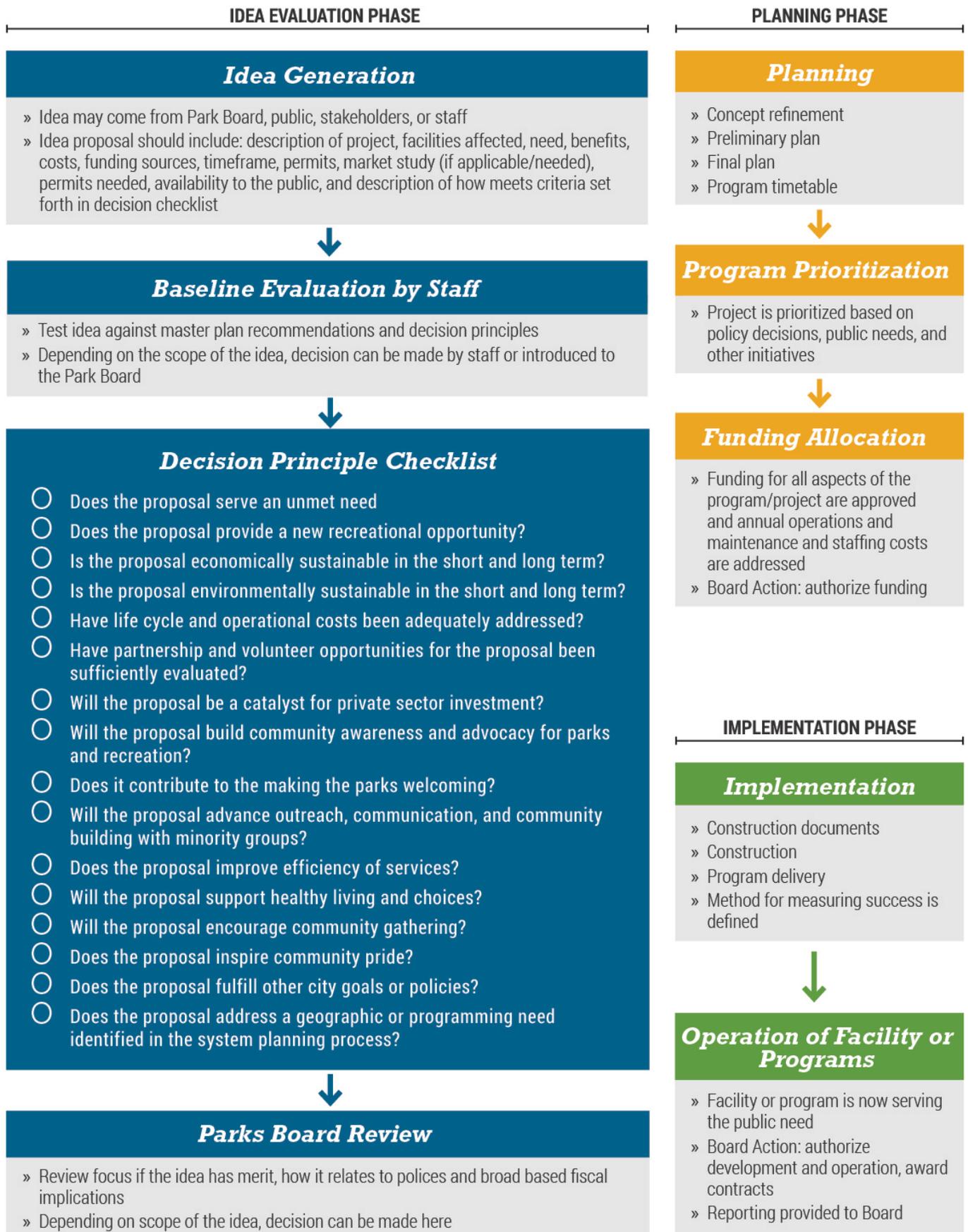
Park Element	Capital Cost	Annual O&M Cost	Estimated Life (years)	Notes
General Grounds & Landscaping				
Mowed Turf Grass (Irrigated)	\$60,000/Acre New Sod \$34,000/Acre New Seed	\$1,000/Acre	15-30	Includes mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating & overseeding.
Mowed Turf Grass (Non Irrigated)	\$30,000/Acre New Sod \$2,000/Acre New Seed	\$800/Acre	15-30	Does not assume hydroseed. Includes mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating & overseeding.
Irrigation	\$25,000/Acre	\$1,300/Acre	25	Includes water costs
Contractual Landscape Maintenance (Street Medians & Natural Prairie Plantings)	\$6.50 Sq. Ft. (\$282,600/Acre)	\$.25 Sq. Ft. (\$9,250/Acre)	20	
Prairie Restoration	\$5,000/Acre	\$300/Acre		
Naturalized Shoreline	\$100/LF	\$400/Acre		
Rain Garden	\$10/Sq. Ft.	\$300/Acre		Low end - high end could be up to \$20/Sq Ft
Woodland Restoration	\$4,000/Acre	\$400/Acre		Assumes restoration of existing wooded area. \$20,000/Acre if new tree planting required
Stormwater Features	\$25/Sq. Ft.	\$900/Acre		
Trails & Surfaces				
Trails (Asphalt)	\$80/LF	\$5,280 Per Mile	30	Assumes 10 foot wide trail
Parking Lots (Asphalt)	\$2,500-\$3,000/Stall	\$20-\$25 Per Stall	40	
Sidewalks (Concrete)	\$45/LF			Assumes 6 foot wide sidewalk
Natural Surface Trails	\$30/LF if limestone ADA or \$5/LF if rustic footpath	\$500/Mile		
Park Facilities				
Multi-purpose buildings with restrooms	\$300-\$400/Sq. Ft.	\$11,000/Bldg./Yr.	40	
Picnic Shelters	\$150-\$200/Sq. Ft.	\$3,800/Bldg./Yr.	40	
Tennis Courts with Lighting	\$175,000	\$1,000/Court	25	Assumes 12,500 Sq. Ft Double Court.
Tennis Courts	\$125,000	\$1,000/Court	25	Assumes 12,500 Sq. Ft. Double Court. Resurfacing includes striping of both tennis and pickleball cost of \$10,000 per court
Pickleball Courts	\$25,000	\$400/Court	25	
Basketball Courts (Concrete)	\$35,000/Court	\$400/Court	50	Assumes 4,680 Sq. Ft.
Basketball Courts (Asphalt)	\$25,000/Court	\$600/Court	25	
Playgrounds	\$50,000 - \$300,000	\$1,500/Site/Yr.	20	
ADA Playground	\$200,000 - \$600,000	\$3,000/Site/Yr.	20	

Park Element	Capital Cost	Annual O&M Cost	Estimated Life (years)	Notes
Park Facilities Continued				
Natural Play Areas	\$50,000-\$250,000	\$1,000/Site/Yr.	20	Assumes 1 to 2 signature features and remainder natural materials
Skate Parks	\$40/Sq. Ft.	\$3,000/Site/Yr.	10-15	
Outdoor Hockey Rinks	\$80,000-\$100,000/Hockey Rink	\$9,000/Rink	20	
Community Gardens	\$10,000-\$20,000/Acre	\$800 Acre		
Off-Leash Dog Park	\$10,000-\$50,000 Acre	\$800 Acre	15-20	
Splash Pad	\$600,000	\$5,000	15-20	
Mountain Biking Course	\$15,000-\$25,000/mile	\$1,000/mile		
Fitness Loop	\$5,000 to \$7,500/station	\$500/station	20	Assumes trail already constructed.
Giant Slide	\$5,000	\$500	20	
Disc Golf Course	\$350 to \$1,000/hole			
Sand Volleyball Court	\$10,000/court			
Neighborhood Park Amenity Package	\$16,000 to \$25,000/park	Included in general park costs	20	Assumes 20-25 \$400 shade trees; 2- \$2,000 benches with concrete pad, 2- \$2,000 bike racks with concrete pad, 2- \$1,000 waste receptacles
Community Park Amenity Package	\$45,000 to \$75,000/park	Included in general park costs	20	Assumes 40-50- \$400 shade trees; 8-12- \$1,200 6 ft. picnic tables 8-12- \$2,000 benches with concrete pad, 2- \$2,000 bike racks with concrete pad
Athletic Fields				
Highly Maintained (Irrigated) Large Rectangular Field (1.5 Acres)	*\$65,000/Field New Sod \$30,000/Field New Seed TURF ONLY	\$4,200/Field	15	Includes lining, mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating, irrigation & overseeding.
Highly Maintained (Irrigated) Medium Size Rectangular Field (.83 Acres)	*\$35,500/Field New Sod \$16,000/Field New Seed TURF ONLY	\$2,300/Field	15	Includes lining, mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating, irrigation & overseeding.
Highly Maintained (Irrigated) Small Size Rectangular Field (.54 Acres)	*\$23,500/Field New Sod \$10,500/Field New Seed TURF ONLY	\$1,500/Field	15	Includes lining, mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating, irrigation & overseeding.
Average Maintained (Non Irrigated) Large Rectangular Field (1.5 Acres)	*\$37,500/Field New Sod \$2,250/Field New Seed TURF ONLY	\$2,000/Field	7	Includes lining, mowing, trimming, fertilizing, weed control, aerating, irrigation & overseeding.

Project Review Process

One of the most challenging things for a parks and recreation department is knowing when to say “yes” to a potential project and when to say “no.” The project review process outlined in Figure 6-1 provides a sample outline for a systematic review of new requests. This type of review ensures that new projects that are in-line with system-wide goals can be adequately funded, staffed, and maintained prior to implementation.

FIGURE 6-1: PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS



Measuring Progress

Routine evaluation of the park and recreation system is valuable, particularly when justifying requests for funds, facilities, staff time, and volunteers. Regular evaluation helps demonstrate that system planning efforts and strategic initiatives are progressing. Communicating system benefits is important to ensure that elected and appointed officials, the public, partners, and other decision makers have a thorough understanding of the magnitude of benefits the system provides to park and recreation users, the community, and region. Regular evaluations also have the potential for pinpointing which improvements would better serve system users and identifying benchmarks for excellence.

Comprehensive evaluations of the parks and recreation system should include both quantitative and qualitative components. Qualitative tools, such as surveys, are relatively easy to conduct and are important in gauging satisfaction, trends, and needs. Surveys, though, do not tell the entire picture. Quantitative methods, such as counts, are important in capturing the who, what, where, and when of park and recreation use. Counts are the most beneficial in demonstrating the magnitude of usage.

There is a long list of options for what to monitor and how to perform the analysis for park metrics. The list below is a sampling of options the city should consider. However, differing metrics may need to be utilized for different types of parks to ascertain the information desired for the entire park system.

Quantitative Data Collection

- » Number of people using parks, trails, and other non-fee facilities through user count program. This data might be collected through counting cars in the parking lot, creating a neighborhood park count volunteer program, or installing technology to count trail users.
- » Number of recreation activities and participants tracked through registrations.
- » Number of events, facility users, and participants tracked through reservations, permitting, and in requests of associations.
- » Measure of improvements made – land acquired, facilities and trails constructed, etc.
- » Number of volunteers.
- » Number of individuals and dollar value of those using the scholarship program.
- » Number of park master plans completed and how many citizens participated in each process.
- » Park and recreation system safety – number of accidents, incidents, and crime.

Qualitative Data Collection

- » Satisfaction surveys of recreation activity participants.
- » Intercept surveys to find out how users got there, why they came, how long they stayed, and the importance of the park's different features and attributes. If done regularly this can be informative of trends.
- » Focus groups to gather information about park use habits and desires for future park system directions.
- » Survey to evaluate perceptions of safety
- » Regular city-wide park survey or inclusion of park-related questions on city survey. Some consistency in questions will assist in evaluating trends over time.
- » Evaluations by associations and other groups that regularly use facilities.

Parks and Recreation uses a number of the quantitative and qualitative methods identified above to measure the system's impacts and needs. Evaluation results are currently shared through the Department's annual report, monthly reports, and on its website. Additional opportunities to share successes and build awareness should be explored. Areas for potential evaluation of the system and the system plan are outlined below.

Potential System Metrics

- » Implementation progress on individual park master plans and system plan recommendations and priorities.
- » Number of participants in planning processes for park and recreation system development.
- » Evaluation of distribution and access for neighborhood parks, community parks, natural areas (small and large), and areas of need (playfields, playgrounds, basketball, and rectangular fields).
- » Amount and results from engagement with minority/immigrant groups,
- » Evaluation of special use parks viability and cost recovery.
- » Number by size of natural areas conserved demonstrating no net-loss of natural areas in park and recreation system.
- » Number of environmental education events per zone in park and recreation system natural areas.
- » Monitor ease of reserving and using facilities through surveys
- » Evaluate success, value, and impact of new programming through counts and surveys.
- » Analyze whether demographic mix of park, trail, and program users is reflective of the City's demographic composition (age, income, race, ethnicity)
- » Evaluate the ability to fund the desired system
- » Summarize the amount of outside funding (grants, partnerships, donations, etc.) secured.

- » Evaluate whether perceptions of safety have improved and compare to actual statistics of incidents.
- » Annually assess sustainability efforts through such measures as quantifying and sharing the annual volume of pesticides applied in the system each year; measuring and comparing water quality in surface waters on an annual basis (temperature, turbidity, pH, dissolved oxygen, etc.); and/or species counts of insects, birds, and other animals before and after projects aimed at supporting biodiversity.
- » Evaluate requests and programs offered by City and partner organizations to determine gaps.
- » Identify challenges to implementation and what steps have been taken to address them.
- » Conduct regular communications strategy workshop with staff to identify website and social media improvements.
- » Every 5 years benchmark the City of Rochester system to other cities in the region and to national averages available from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in the areas of facilities, operations, and funding.

Activity Delivery Guidelines

The guidelines in Table 6-4 provide direction regarding the frequency and intended geographic distribution of facilities.

Geographic access to recreation activities should be addressed in an effort to provide equitable and convenient access to facilities. The delivery levels range from city to neighborhood scale and define the expectations for the quantity and general location of a particular facility. The physical facilities and programs needed for the activity may be best delivered, modified, or created by the City; or by service providers alone or in partnership with the City.

TABLE 6-4: ACTIVITY DELIVERY GUIDELINES

Facility	Class of park that may provide this facility
Provide within each Park Subzone	
Playground every 1/2 mile	Mini-park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, Athletic Complex
Open Play Field (available in half of neighborhood parks in subzone)	Mini-park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, Athletic Complex
Nature Area (1 acre+) every 3/4 mile	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Environmental Park, Linear Park, Regional Park
Basketball - one half court	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, Athletic Complex
Provide within each Park Zone	
Diamond Field (baseball, softball) - one set of 3-4 fields	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, Athletic Complex
Basketball - one or two full size courts, prioritize locations with parking	Community Park, Athletic Complex
Community Garden	Neighborhood Park, Community Park
Hockey/Pleasure Skating	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Athletic Complex
Horseshoes - one set of 2, prioritize locations with shelters	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park
Interactive water feature - in zones with no other aquatics facility	Community Park, Athletic Complex
Nature Area (20+ acres)	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, Environmental, Linear
Natural Playscape	Any park
Pickleball - at least one tennis court striped for pickleball	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, Athletic Complex
Rectangular Field (soccer, football, lacrosse) - one group of 6+ fields	Community Park, Athletic Complex
Sand Volleyball - one court, prioritize locations with shelters	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Athletic Complex
Tennis - set of 2-4 courts	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Athletic Complex
Provide within the Community	
Aquatics (pool)	Community Park, Regional Park, Special Use
Aquatics (beach)	Community Park, Regional Park
Archery	Community Park, Regional Park
Community Garden	Community Park
Cross-country Skiing	Community Park, Regional Park, Environmental, Golf
Disc Golf	Community Park
Dog Park	Community Park, Special Use
Golf	Golf
Indoor Athletic Facility	Community Park, Special Use
Indoor Multi-Purpose Facility	Community Park
Mountain Biking	Community Park, Special Use
Nature Center	Community Park, Regional Park, Special Use
Skate Park	Community Park
Sledding	Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, Golf
Sports Complex – Outside	Community Park, Athletic Park
Tennis – set of 7 courts	Community Park
Pickleball – set of 6 courts	Community Park

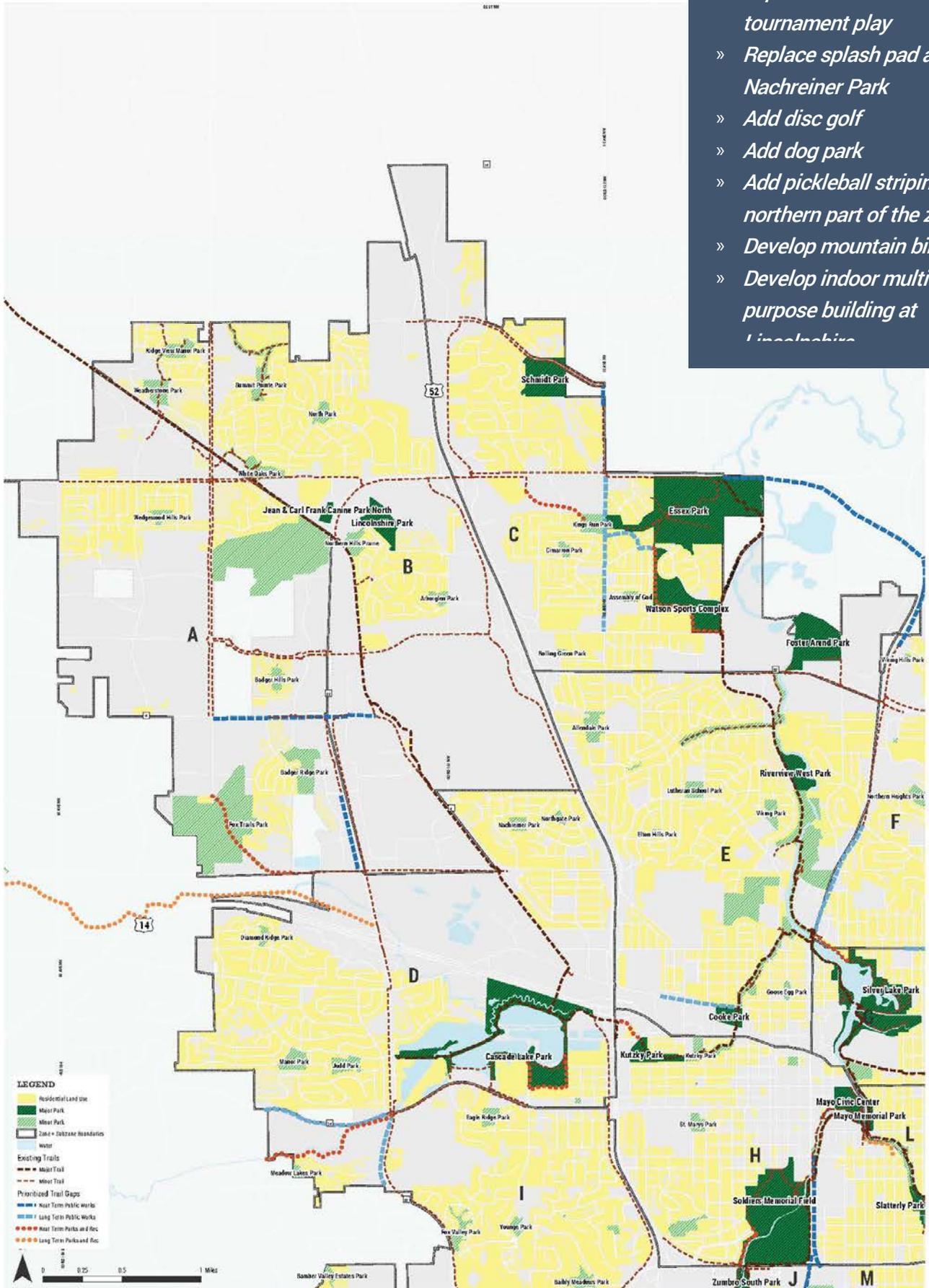


Appendix

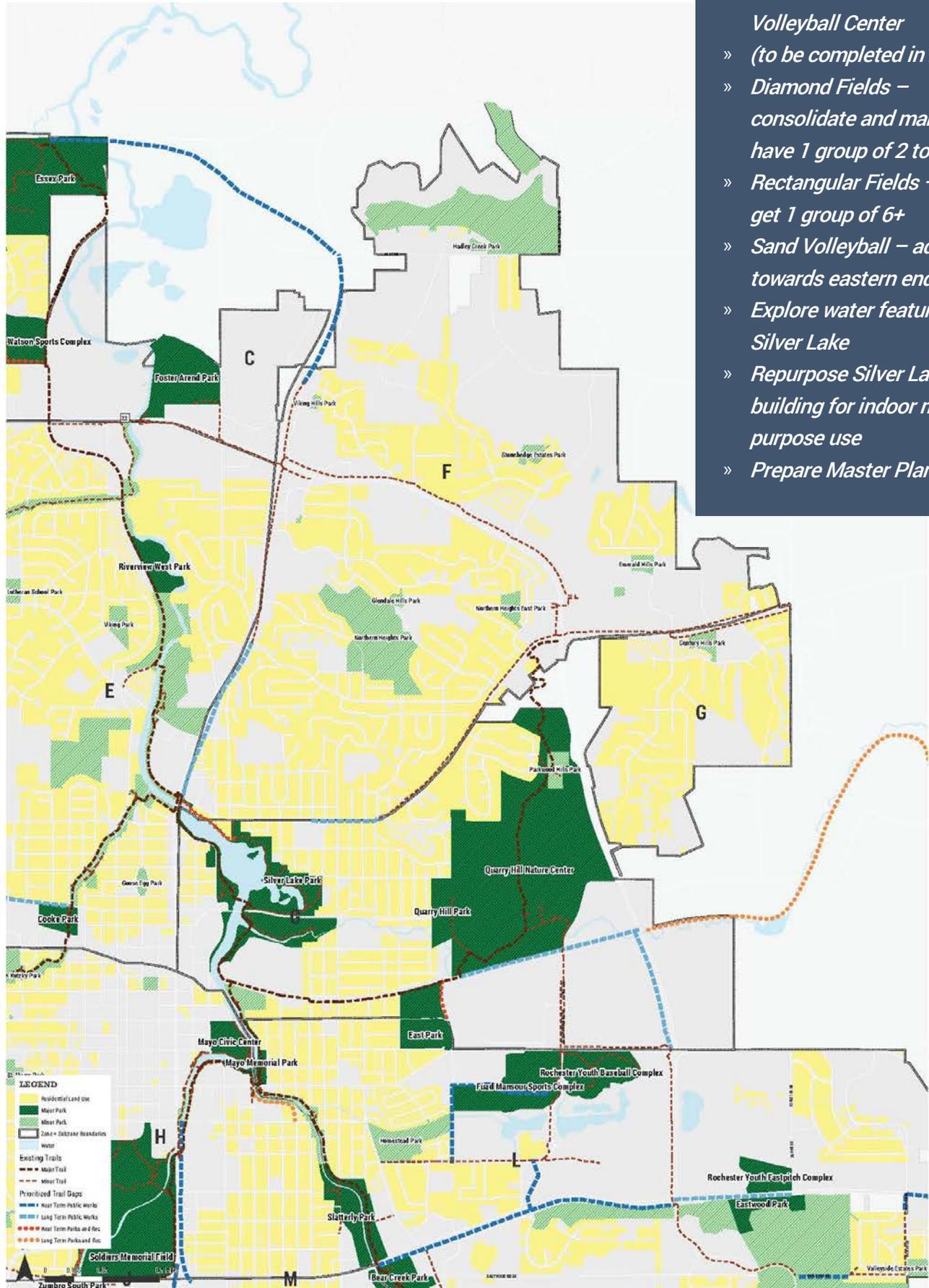


GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS: NORTHWEST

- » *Improve Watson for tournament play*
- » *Replace splash pad at Nachreiner Park*
- » *Add disc golf*
- » *Add dog park*
- » *Add pickleball striping in the northern part of the zone*
- » *Develop mountain biking*
- » *Develop indoor multi-purpose building at Lincolnshire*



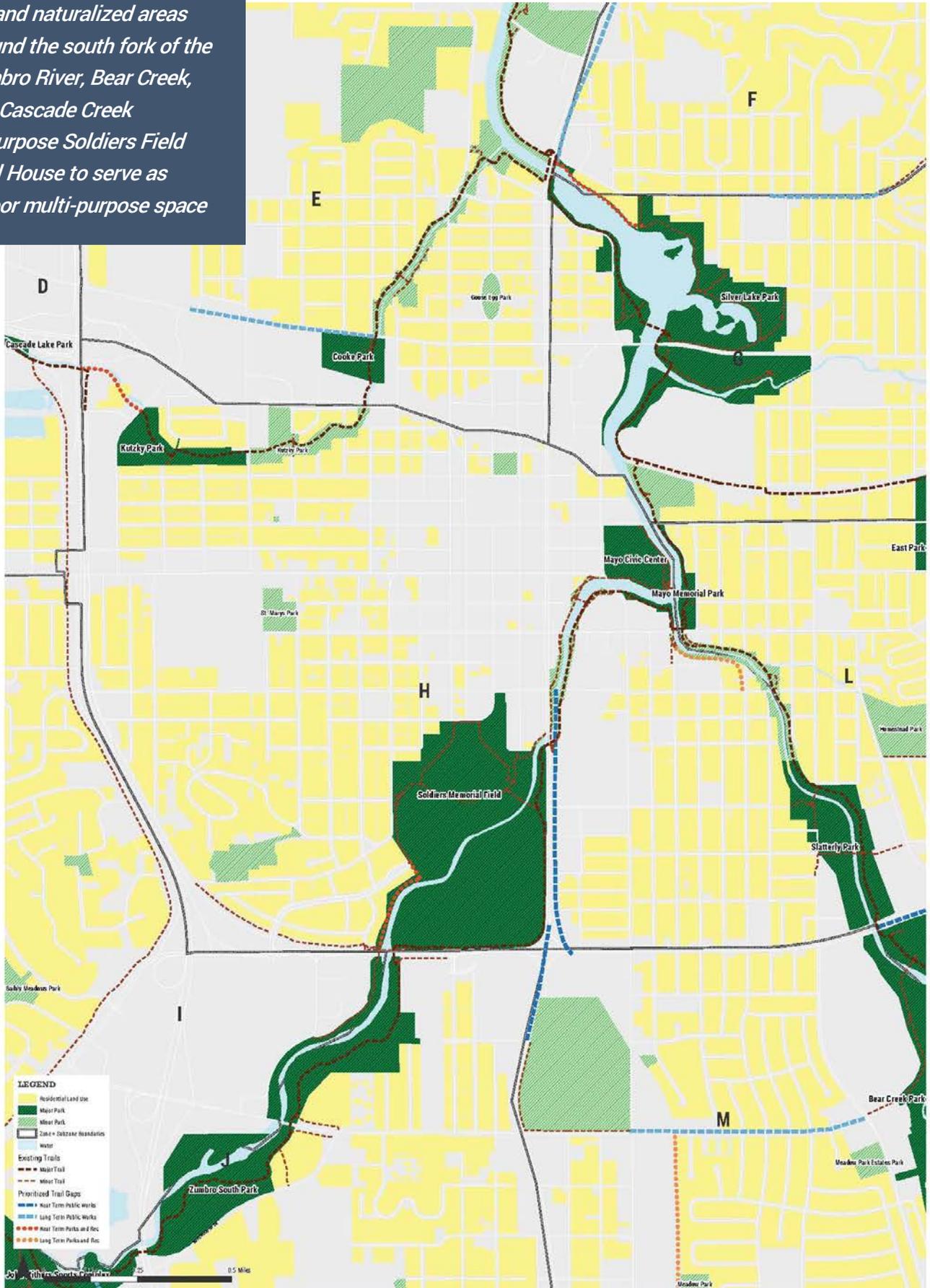
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS: NORTHEAST



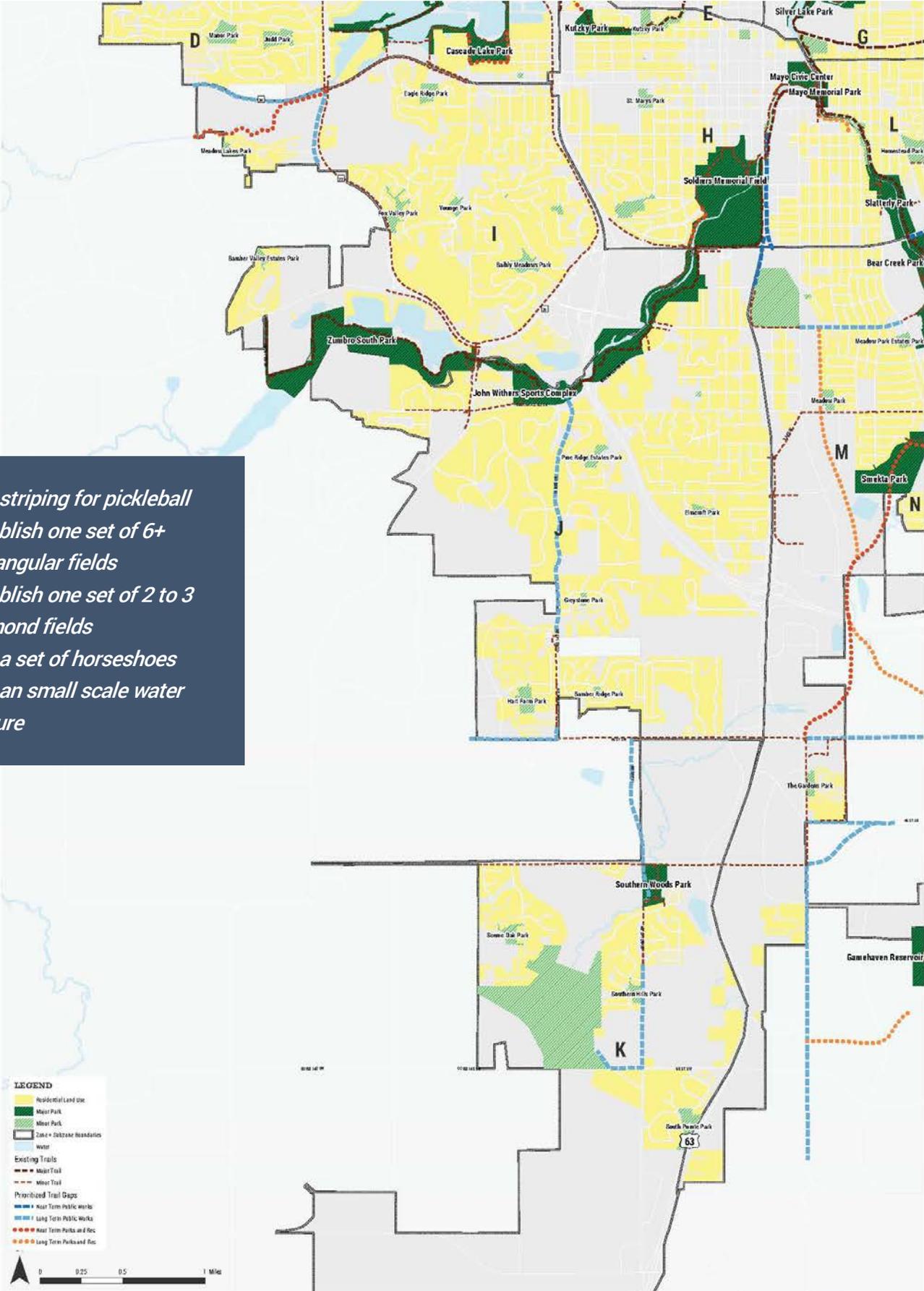
- » *Pickleball at National Volleyball Center*
- » *(to be completed in 2016)*
- » *Diamond Fields – consolidate and make sure have 1 group of 2 to 3 fields*
- » *Rectangular Fields – add to get 1 group of 6+*
- » *Sand Volleyball – add towards eastern end of zone*
- » *Explore water feature at Silver Lake*
- » *Repurpose Silver Lake Pool building for indoor multi-purpose use*
- » *Prepare Master Plan for*

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS: CENTRAL

- » Expand naturalized areas around the south fork of the Zumbro River, Bear Creek, and Cascade Creek
- » Repurpose Soldiers Field Pool House to serve as indoor multi-purpose space

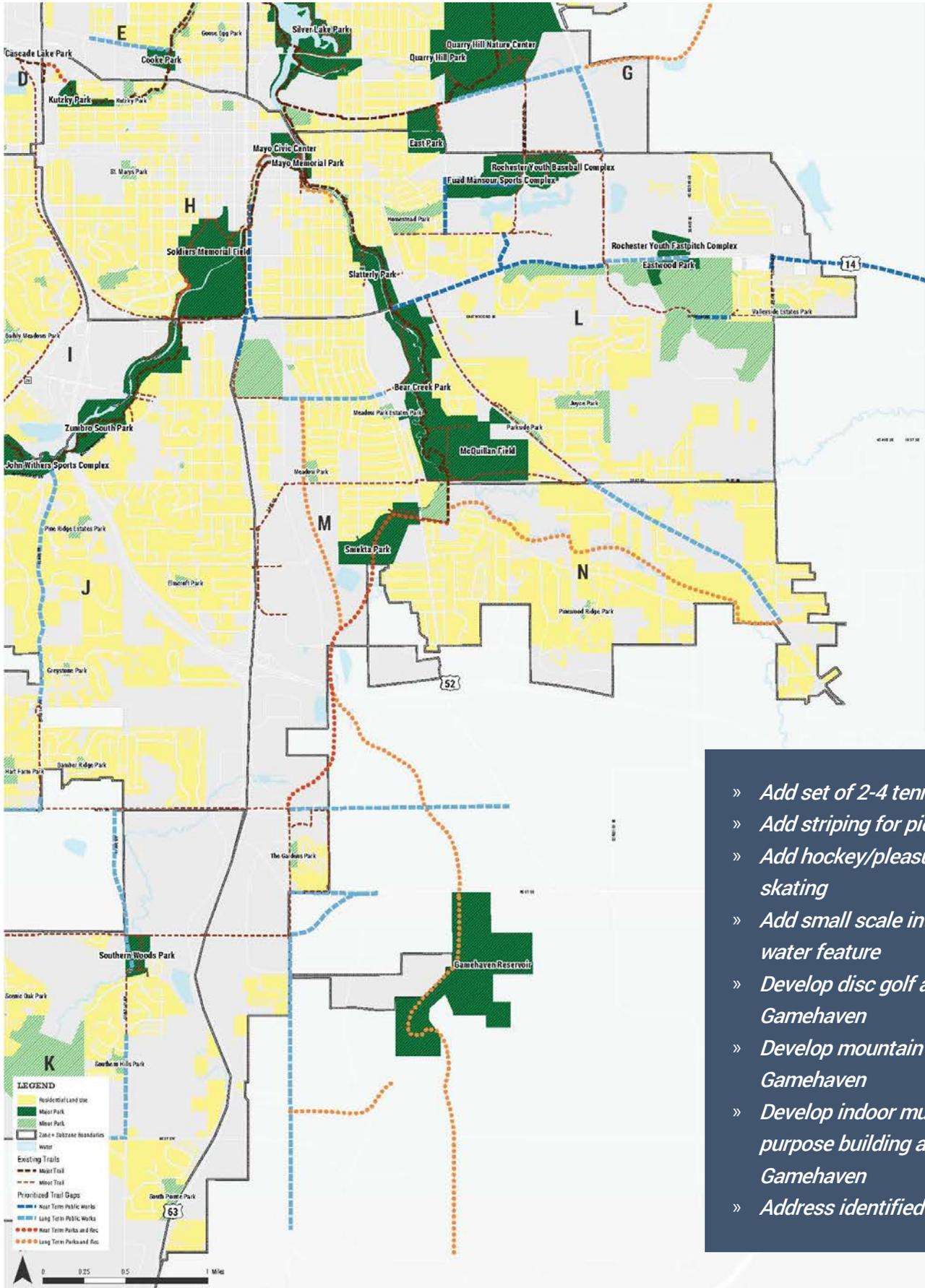


GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS: SOUTHWEST



- » *Add striping for pickleball*
- » *Establish one set of 6+ rectangular fields*
- » *Establish one set of 2 to 3 diamond fields*
- » *Add a set of horseshoes*
- » *Add an small scale water feature*

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS: SOUTHEAST



- » Add set of 2-4 tennis courts
- » Add striping for pickleball
- » Add hockey/pleasure skating
- » Add small scale interactive water feature
- » Develop disc golf at Gamehaven
- » Develop mountain biking at Gamehaven
- » Develop indoor multi-purpose building at Gamehaven
- » Address identified amenity